

Lane County Sheriff's Office

Thomas M. Turner, Sheriff



March 2, 2011

Chairwoman Burdick & Senate Committee Members
Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Salem OR 97308

RE: SB443

Dear Chairwoman Burdick and Members of the Committee:

As Sheriff of Lane County, I join the Lane County Board of Commissioners in urging you to send SB 443 to the Senate floor with a "DO PASS" recommendation. This bill makes permanent a practice implemented with a sunset provision by the 2007 Legislature. Specifically, the measure allows Lane and Douglas Counties to use road funds for the purpose of patrolling county roads.

The Oregon Legislature initially passed this legislation in 2007 when both Lane and Douglas Counties were facing an uncertain revenue picture due to the anticipated elimination of the Secure Rural Schools Act. Lane and Douglas County are facing the same situation in 2011. Therefore, the continued ability for County Commissioners to transfer funds from the Road Fund to public safety purposes on County roads remains as important as ever.

Lane County is the second largest county in Oregon, comprising over 4,700 square miles. Within that vast area are over 2,600 miles of state highways, county roads and streets. Lane County citizens are proud of the well-maintained network of roads that have been constructed throughout this large area. However, these roads require a law enforcement presence to make roads safe for all who travel on them.

The origin of these funds can be traced to 1907 when the National Forest system was created by Gifford Pinchot under the direction of President Theodore Roosevelt. These individuals, and the US Congress, recognized that placing large tracts of forest into the public trust removed these lands from the tax base for future generations. Thus, they established (under 16 USC 500) a system of revenue sharing such that 25% of the revenue from timber harvested from these lands would be provided to the counties where these lands existed for the purpose of supporting roads and schools "*at the discretion of the state legislature*". Under ORS 294.060, road funds receive 75% of this revenue, and schools receive 25%. The 2007 measure passed by the Legislature suggested that the road fund could also be utilized for patrolling county roads for the purpose of providing safety services to the users of those roads.

In the coming fiscal year, Lane County is facing a \$6-\$7 million shortfall. It is also the final year of the Secure Rural Schools funding. In FY13 and beyond, we are anticipating reductions in services that are unprecedented. The overarching mission of my agency is to make Lane County a safer place to live by protecting the lives and property of its citizens. As the budget situation becomes increasingly grim, this mission becomes ever more challenging.

At present, forest related fund transfers allowed by this legislation are a primary revenue source used to support our patrol deputies. SB443 eliminates a sunset provision in legislation that will allow the Lane County Sheriff's Office access to critically needed revenue in the future, and help us meet our responsibilities to the citizens of Lane County and others who travel Lane County roads.

I ask you to please support SB443 and send the bill to the Senate with a "DO PASS" recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas M. Turner, Sheriff
Lane County Sheriff's Office