

Lane County Sheriff's Office



Thomas M. Turner, Sheriff

February 7, 2013

Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair

RE: SB 422

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee;

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about SB 422. Oregon law as currently written does not allow Oregon fire districts to use their funds for law enforcement purposes. This bill will allow rural fire protection districts to contract with law enforcement agencies for special law enforcement services requested by that district. This would enable rural fire districts to provide law enforcement in much the same way that several of Lane County's smaller cities provide law enforcement, that is, through a contractual relationship (ORS 190) with the Lane County Sheriff's Office.

Law Enforcement and Fire Protection Services both play valuable roles in emergency response. Many calls for fire service also require law enforcement personnel for safety purposes. The number of police officers per capita in Oregon is already low, and in Lane County we no longer are able to provide 24/7 patrol coverage. Oregon law enforcement agencies are facing future reductions in revenue used for their operations due to declining federal funding and property tax values. Both of these factors have resulted in lack of, or extremely delayed, response for fire service calls that require police personnel to be present. As a result, fire personnel are being placed in situations that are unsafe because they do not have dedicated law enforcement personnel to assist them on calls.

SB 422 would enable Fire District personnel in Oregon to perform the duties they were assigned to, up to and to including the preservation of life, without delay, or in unsafe conditions that could have been made safe by ensuring that local law enforcement are available to the District.

I hope you will find that SB 422 is a bill worth supporting. I'd urge you to schedule a work session for this bill and to send it to the Senate with a "DO PASS" recommendation.

It would give our fire districts the option to contract with us for law enforcement personnel and help them achieve their mission in the safest manner possible.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom. Turner".

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