



Interstate-5 Bridge Replacement Project Joint Committee
Monday February 11th, 2013 3:00pm HR F
HB 2800

Chairs and members of the Committee, my name is Tom Gerding and I am here today, wearing two hats: one as President of AGC and the other as President and owner of Gerding Companies. As the current President of the Oregon Columbia Chapter of the Associated General Contractors, we represent over 900 Oregon and SW Washington firms employing thousands of Oregonians within the construction industry. As the owner and President of Gerding Companies located in Corvallis, my firm is a small business that constructs commercial buildings and as such, I have no monetary benefit in the outcome of this bill you are reviewing today.

You see, as President of our association, I have opportunities to travel and interact with others in our industry throughout our State. This extended economic recession/(depression for some) has had devastating impacts on far too many of our members across rural Oregon. Last month I spoke to Don Thompson of Donald W Thompson Inc., a general contractor in Coos Bay. He and his brother Dan continue a business their father started in 1954. He shared with me how they have so little opportunity for work and so little going on that they seriously contemplated shutting things down this past year. They made the determination to keep the doors open in hopes that this coming year might have new opportunities. They are literally running on fumes so to speak. This story echoes for far too many in our industry today including firms East of the mountains in Bend and Redmond as well as South to Klamath Falls, up the 84 corridor in Pendleton, La Grand, and on down to Ontario, and those on the Oregon Coast from Astoria down to Brookings have been especially hit hard. Many of these firms are small, family-owned businesses that employ local community members. They volunteer with school booster clubs, local fire departments, and a host of non-profit entities. They play a vital part in making their local areas they reside in HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

It is my understanding that the current plan for funding this bill is through ODOT's existing resources. My request is that you do not place the extended funding of this project on the back of ODOT's annual budget. The consequence of doing so will literally decimate already struggling firms, especially small rural firms dependent on the various small road, bridge, and other miscellaneous projects ODOT administers throughout all regions of our State. By taking a substantial portion of ODOT's annual funding for infrastructure investment and applying those funds in one location for an extended number of years would leave too many firms with no work to pursue. That would be the final nail on the coffin lid, so to speak, driving them out of business and further exasperating the construction unemployment in our non-metro regions.

I would be happy to try to answer any of the questions chairs and committee members may have.