

## **AOC SUPPORTS SB 5525, BUSINESS OREGON'S BUDGET**

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) strongly supports SB 5525, Business Oregon's proposed budget. Business Oregon has been a terrific partner with Oregon's counties in encouraging economic development throughout the state. AOC's members are grateful for the work Business Oregon accomplishes in expanding existing businesses; nurturing innovation and startups; recruiting traded-sector employers in key industries; and building infrastructure for communities to grow.

AOC is particularly pleased with Business Oregon's focus on improving the rural economies in our state. AOC's members, including those from urban counties, understand that all areas of our state must succeed in order for Oregon to thrive. Investments such as the \$10 million Infrastructure Opportunity Program, the \$28 million Special Public Works Fund, and \$5 million for Natural Resources Transformative Technology Grants will help spur economic growth in rural Oregon.

Investment in infrastructure is extremely important to all areas of Oregon. In addition to those listed above, AOC is supportive of Business Oregon's request for \$100 million of general obligation bonds for Seismic Rehabilitation of critical buildings; \$70 million for schools and \$30 million for emergency services buildings. Additionally, with hundreds of abandoned, polluted sites across the state, AOC is hopeful that Business Oregon's \$7.1 million request for Brownfields recapitalization will be funded. Although not nearly enough to put a dent in the problem, we are grateful that this funding will assist in addressing the blight caused by Brownfields in so many of our communities.

AOC believes that innovation is one of the most effective ways to drive job growth and long-term prosperity. Therefore, we support Business Oregon's 2015 innovation agenda which would increase support for the Oregon Innovation Council, investments in early-stage companies, an innovation network in the southern Willamette Valley, and an industry-university partnership on metals manufacturing.

Finally, AOC is extremely supportive of the funding request for Regional Solutions. Every area of the state has benefitted greatly from the work of Regional Solutions. Whether cutting through red tape or making financial investments in community priorities, Regional Solutions staff and advisory committees have made many positive impacts in Oregon's counties. The \$22 million for priority projects and funding for staff will enable this important and beneficial work to continue.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge Director Sean Robbins; his recent outreach across the state has infused a new energy into Business Oregon and its programs. AOC appreciates our partnership and looks forward to assisting Business Oregon meet its goals in the 2015-17 Biennium. We strongly encourage your support for SB 5525.

Should you have any questions about AOC or its position on this bill, you may contact Mary Stern, AOC Policy Manager.