



Testimony of Don Slone, OFA President  
Joint Ways & Means General Government Subcommittee  
Informational Hearing on County Fairs  
March 23, 2015

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Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward and Smith, and Subcommittee members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Don Slone, President of the Oregon Fairs Association, and manager of the Harney County Fair, Rodeo & Race Meet in Burns. I'm also Oregon's representative on the Western Fairs Association Board of Directors.

On behalf of OFA's Board of Directors, 37 Fair Members, and 133 Service Members, I'm happy to report to you that our state's fairs and fairgrounds continue to be one of the biggest—perhaps **the** biggest—gathering spots for Oregonians and out of state visitors both during the months of summer, and throughout the rest of the year too.

Fairgrounds are the hub of their communities and act as a magnet for countless events that fill motel rooms, crowd restaurants, and boost local economies. From a public service perspective, they also provide crucially necessary facilities to the state when staging areas are needed to fight wildfires, shelter in times of local emergencies, and venues for public safety training and health clinics.

A few very pertinent statistics concerning fairs and fairgrounds in 2014:

- Total fair attendance was nearly 1.7 million people, and while that was about a 1% decrease from 2013, it was still more than the total combined attendance at all home games for the Oregon and Oregon State football teams, and the Portland Trail Blazers.
- Total non-fair attendance at more than 15,000 events throughout the year was over 3.9 million, and that's 4% higher than in 2013. It's also nearly four times more people than attended events at the Portland Expo Center and Oregon Convention Center combined.
- Fair payrolls for nearly 1,500 full and part-time employees grew to more than \$9 million, and the paid workforce was augmented by an army of over 10,000 volunteers who donated an estimated total of 233,000 hours of their time.

- One of the statistics that I'm most proud of is that our fairground facilities were used by 643 non-profit groups last year as locations for fundraising activities that generated more than \$9 million that was put to good use in our communities for civic and charitable programs.
- We're very proud to report that Junior Livestock Auction receipts at fairs last summer reached an all-time high of \$8.4 million. Nearly all of these funds are used by hundreds of 4-H and FFA livestock owners to pay for their future college costs. As such, the Junior Livestock Auctions represent one of the biggest sources of educational funding assistance in Oregon.
- You may have seen some of the 4-H kids joining us in the capitol today. Beyond the livestock auctions, fairs and fairgrounds provided a venue for nearly 19,000 young people to proudly exhibit their carefully raised animals, handcrafted clothing and baked goods, beautiful photographs, and many other activity categories that do so much to help build both artistic and life skills in our future leaders.

I could go on and on about all the good that comes from fairs and fairgrounds, but the bottom line is to once again let you know that the Oregon Legislature's investment of a small amount of lottery funds to every county fair is yielding a very good return. HB5029 and SB 5502 would continue that investment with a total appropriation of \$3,648,000 for the biennium—just under \$51,000 for every fair each year. This is at the same level as the current biennium.

I want to conclude by saying how appreciative the fairs are of this continued support from the state and that we don't by any means take it for granted. One of the main activities of the OFA is to coordinate annual reporting by every fair to compile the data that I've reported to you today. We have a standing committee devoted to reviewing not only the reports that are received, but which also continually updates the reporting forms and directions so that we can maintain consistency and accuracy. I've attached to my written testimony a detailed table showing ten years' worth of information that goes far beyond my testimony.

Again, my sincere thanks for your time today and for scheduling this informational hearing during our "Fairs Day at the Capitol" event.

Brenda, Kelly, and I are happy to take any questions that you may have.

# Oregon County and State Fair Data

2005-2014

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Fair Attendance	1,477,098	1,527,632	1,571,151	1,561,094	1,476,857	1,491,271	1,501,710	1,739,637	1,692,739	1,674,448
Auction Receipts	6,707,494	7,759,174	7,830,484	7,445,839	6,482,026	6,551,767	7,063,630	7,522,527	7,733,138	8,406,869
Exhibits	150,013	145,672	150,189	148,895	157,786	145,642	152,594	151,591	141,659	140,625
Exhibitors	38,242	37,936	40,276	39,083	39,498	41,697	39,389	39,281	34,761	39,123
Interim Uses	25,813	23,604	24,226	24,621	23,389	22,758	20,908	15,633	15,786	15,112
Interim Attendance	4,179,460	4,543,137	4,791,194	4,915,368	4,419,438	3,614,609	3,731,243	3,996,406	3,763,930	3,913,774
Payroll	7,969,241	8,452,687	8,875,679	9,480,372	8,661,557	8,774,420	8,711,223	8,674,304	8,842,385	9,168,289
Volunteers	10,547	9,558	9,441	9,428	10,187	11,744	11,498	10,073	10,360	10,185
Volunteer Hours	306,720	251,888	290,768	312,576	411,304	427,800	280,524	287,628	273,878	232,554
Non Profit Fundraisers	1,231	1,328	1,156	1,075	770	789	832	694	623	643
Non Profits Funds Raised	6,650,586	6,847,903	7,190,607	7,541,119	7,021,694	6,571,858	6,585,695	7,593,047	8,606,066	9,294,560
State Funds	1,376,208	1,672,413	1,672,413	1,778,571	1,778,544	1,510,652	1,297,106	1,800,068	1,824,000	1,824,000
County General Fund	1,535,447	1,795,937	1,892,244	1,493,237	1,392,982	1,352,602	1,153,637	1,194,604	1,722,731	1,964,571
Funds from Annual Fair	9,029,159	10,200,558	10,727,724	10,612,633	9,495,420	9,297,158	9,716,932	10,956,066	11,366,200	10,558,864
Funds from Interim Events	9,057,773	9,954,404	10,986,219	11,053,465	8,942,798	10,366,375	9,017,337	9,707,817	8,318,560	9,970,098
Other Funding (Sponsorship, Lodging Tax, etc.)	3,059,191	2,889,069	3,412,486	4,070,756	4,309,710	3,519,542	3,644,162	4,679,640	4,612,320	3,649,064