

Senator Betsy Johnson
900 Court Street NE, S-209
Salem, OR 97301

Representative David Gomberg
900 Court Street NE, H-471
Salem, OR 97301

May 6, 2015

Subject: Support for HB 2997 and HB 2998

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development:

I'm writing today to express my support for passage and full funding of HB 2997 and HB 2998.

Almost five years ago I was asked to be a co-convenor of the Oregon Solutions Western Juniper Utilization Project. Although I had some business interest in Juniper (and still do), it quickly became apparent to me that this effort could provide jobs, help the environment and could and should receive support from a wide variety of interests....even bi-partisan support!

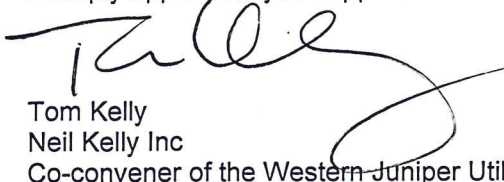
These complementary bills will encourage the sustainable harvest and utilization of Western Juniper for ecological benefit and economic development in rural communities, as well as provide sustainable and locally produced wood products to the urban marketplace and green building sector.

HB 2997 will provide funds to support liaison efforts between businesses, governmental organizations, and other private entities to improve juniper supply chains and achieve market development and demand for this underutilized species. These resources will ensure that entities like the Western Juniper Alliance can continue its work in partnership with Juniper entrepreneurs, while a self-sustaining Juniper industry is established and matures in the near future.

HB 2998 will provide competitive working capital in the form of loans and grants for small Juniper sawmills and entrepreneurs to strengthen and expand their businesses and maintain and create jobs in rural communities. It will also provide technical and business assistance to small Juniper businesses to improve their financial viability, maintain a durable and efficient presence in the marketplace, and support training programs for workforce development to make sure that jobs in the industry benefit rural communities suffering from high unemployment and poverty.

Your support of this effort is vital and will move along the economy in Central and Eastern Oregon.

I deeply appreciate your support.



Tom Kelly
Neil Kelly Inc
Co-convenor of the Western Juniper Utilization Group

Neil Kelly

DESIGN / BUILD REMODELING
HANDYMAN SERVICES
HOME PERFORMANCE
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CUSTOM HOMES
CABINETS

Headquarters

North Portland Design Center

804 N Alberta St
Portland, OR 97217

Phone: 503.288.7461

Fax: 503.288.7464

Lake Oswego Design Center

15573 Bangy Rd, Suite 100
Lake Oswego, OR 97035

Phone: 503.288.7461

Fax: 503.288.7464

Eugene Design Center

2817 Oak St
Eugene, OR 97405

Phone: 541.683.6085

Fax: 541.683.6097

Bend Design Center

190 NE Irving Ave
Bend, OR 97701

Phone: 541.382.7580

Fax: 541.382.3975

Seattle Design Center

5959 Corson Ave S, Suite B
Seattle, WA 98108

Phone: 206.343.2822

Fax: 206.405.1865

Salem: 503.370.4400

Vancouver: 360.696.2204

Toll Free 866.691.2719

neilkelly.com

OR CCB #001663
WA L&I #NEILKCI 18702

