



Bill Hall
County Commissioner

Courthouse, Room 110
225 W. Olive Street
Newport, Oregon 97365
(541) 265-4100
FAX (541) 265-4176

May 6, 2015

Chair Barnhart, Vice Chair Bentz, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Bill Hall. I live in Newport and I am currently in my third term as a Lincoln County Commissioner. I am also serving as the second Vice President of the Oregon Association of Counties. I am here to ask you to support HJR 21. My county is not one of the thirteen counties that would be impacted if HJR 21 is approved. Many decades ago, in their wisdom, my predecessors proposed, and our citizens approved, a tax rate of two dollars, eighty-two cents of assessed value for county services.

Thanks to that foresight, we've been spared the worst of the trauma that many of our neighbors have experienced since harvesting of timber on national forests was so sharply curtailed, but we were still forced to make significant reductions in staff and services during the last recession, slashing our workforce by 15 percent. However, we have never had to consider all but eliminating sheriff's patrols or shutting down our jail. Yet that is the reality that has been starting too many Oregon counties in the face year after year.

You could argue that HJR 21 is a band-aid; that we need to do a lot more to fix the economy of rural Oregon. You would be correct. But HJR 21 is a crucial first step in insuring that Oregon reclaims its own destiny. If HJR 21 is approved by voters, we will no longer be at the mercy of the whims of Congress, going to Washington with hat in hand asking for another bailout. We will have the crucial stability to ensure that every county in this great state.

Cicero said, "The safety of the people shall be the highest law." Twenty-one hundred years later, not much has changed. I find my constituents deliver only a few clear and consistent messages over time. First among them is an expectation that government keep them safe. For this reason above all, I urge your support of HJR 21. Thank you.

