



# Forest River, Inc.

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March 9, 2017

Chair Beyer and Members of the committee:

I am writing to you as the general manager for Forest River Inc. in Dallas, OR and urge you to support Senate Bill 753, which will allow us to retain and grow our operation in Oregon. Our company is headquartered in Elkhart, IN with the majority of our plants located in northern Indiana. However, due to the strength of the recreational vehicle market, the company has decided to expand in both the states of Oregon and California. As a result, in the past three years, the company has opened three new operations in Oregon, adding to the existing operations located in Dallas and Independence. This expansion includes plants in Silverton, Harrisburg and the recently acquired plant in Sheridan – and by recently, I mean in the last two weeks (I have attached the most recent announcement from the publication RV Business). We currently employ an Oregon workforce of over 900 people. We have also recently expanded in California and doubled our production capacity there.

Our plants in Oregon build cargo trailers, and a variety of travel trailers and fifth wheels for the RV market. We build three of the top five selling brands in North America under the names of Salem, Wildwood and Cherokee along with a number of other brands. We distribute our products to the western third of the U.S. and Canada.

In 2016, it came to our attention that the Building Codes Division in the state wanted to begin enforcing licensing requirements for workers who do electrical and plumbing work on recreational vehicles manufactured in Oregon. This requirement would be the only such requirement in the United States and would put our operation at a competitive disadvantage with other operations out of state. Our competitors in other states like Idaho, California, Indiana and Colorado, would have the advantage over any similar operation in Oregon.

We believe this licensing requirement is a redundant and unnecessary burden for this work. The electrical and plumbing components in our RVs are highly engineered and assembled before they get to the plant so the work performed here is not similar to the building of permanent structures. Additionally, all of our RVs meet the A119.5 national standard for RVs, developed by the American National Standards Institute and enforced by the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association by means of thorough inspections of our plants and products at least six times per year.

We want to keep this work in Oregon, and hope you can help us do so by supporting Senate Bill 753.

Sincerely,

Paul Eskritt  
General Manager

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## Forest River Expanding West Coast Production

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Forest River Inc. recently purchased a 25-acre property in Sheridan, Ore., with plans to beef up West Coast production capacity with the addition of the former Liberty Homes facility, including expanded assembly of Surveyor and R-pod towable lines, spokesmen confirm.

Forest River's new Northwest Oregon plant — the Berkshire Hathaway Inc subsidiary's sixth in Oregon and 10th on the West Coast — consists of two manufacturing plants totaling 215,000 square feet. Renovation work is to begin immediately, spokesmen indicate, with plans to be up and running by this summer.

"This expansion is in response to the growing demand of our products on the West Coast," stated Kevin McArt, general manager of the Surveyor and R-pod lines. "We have exhausted our current capacity and with this additional manufacturing space we'll be able to reduce our response time to our loyal dealer base.

"Between the RV and cargo trailer operations already in place at existing operations, Forest River currently employs over 900 people in the state. This new expansion project will take Forest River's Oregon employment well over 1,000 and further demonstrates Forest River's commitment to the Western markets and their outstanding dealer network."

The news comes only three months after Forest River made headlines around Northern Indiana with the acquisition of a 120-acre former Dutch Housing complex in LaGrange, about a half hour's drive east of Elkhart, housing around 450,000 square feet of vacant manufacturing space in four large buildings that should result in the addition of at least a couple of hundred jobs over the next year.



Doug Gaeddert

Three of the four LaGrange facilities, with upgrades nearly completed, should be operational shortly, reported Forest River General Manager Doug Gaeddert, who said that the LaGrange move is sort of a "natural progression" for the company which already maintains a strong presence in that general area east of Goshen with facilities in the communities of Topeka, Millersburg and Middlebury.

"The first plant to fire up, which is already in double digits per day, produces our Cherokee, Wolfpack, Vengeance and XLR toy haulers. We had outgrown where we were at before with the other current facilities," explained Gaeddert. "And the other half of that 100,000-square-foot plant is dedicated 100% to factory service and the

large crate-free type of parts.

So, we actually have two parts and service locations within this 120-acre complex," he added. "One will primarily be a call center, parts and UPS, and the other will be a physical unit with scaffolding just like you would set up in a manufacturing plant. The larger part will be a common carrier, crate-and-freight type setup."

While the next LaGrange plant to be opened will house production of the Cherokee Artic Wolf, a laminated mid-profile fifth-wheel, yet another facility at the LaGrange County complex is actually leased for the time being to "our friendly but No. 1 competitor Thor Industries," said Gaeddert. "This past week, we moved about 30 folks out there on the sales, administrative and parts, and service side of things from Topeka and Goshen, so we're well underway out there."



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