

Remarks by Commissioner Kelley Minty Morris

Tuesday April 4th Hearing-

Thank you Chair Barnhart, and members of the Committee, for giving us an opportunity to work with you on bringing new jobs and new investment to Oregon.

I'm one of the Klamath County Commissioners and also sit on the Board of Trustees for Oregon Tech, so while many debate ducks versus beavers, I am firmly, unapologetically an Owl! Because our graduates are so special, earning the highest average salary upon graduation, routinely ranked as one of the best schools by various publications and boasting the highest job placement ranking upon graduation at more than 90 percent, we, as leaders often ask ourselves, how can we encourage these talented graduates to stay in our great state, investing their talents in the future of Oregon.

To help answer that question, I recently worked with three students on their senior project. Full disclosure here: they did the work and I "supervised". They surveyed more than 600 of their peers to get a sense of why they often leave our county and our state. The results were clear- Oregon's best and brightest said they'd stay in Oregon AND in rural Klamath County, IF they were job opportunities. At that moment, I made a commitment to improve the job prospects in rural Oregon to prevent so-called "brain drain" and lift up our economy.

When reviewing this bill, you may have thought, “Why support something so Klamath specific?” Please consider this- all pockets and corners of this great state have unique attributes. Falls, beaches, breweries, agriculture and other ingredients in the “special sauce” of this state. For Klamath County, our unique attribute is the combination of Oregon Tech, the only Polytechnic University in the Pacific Northwest, and Kingsley Air Base, the only F-15 fighter pilot training base in the county. We are uniquely positioned to contribute to the security and future job, and for your purposes, revenue creation in the state of Oregon by combining these attributes. While this bill will likely have a minimal impact on the state budget, the message it allows us to send is one of opportunity. Let’s quit talking about the challenges of rural Oregon and instead embrace the potential.

It is a priority of our Governor, myself, Colonel Smith and likely many of you to make sure our citizens are safe. We can help ensure the cyber security of our state and county, well into the future, by promoting these minimal credits for this growing industry. Consider this- South of us sits Silicon Valley and to the North is Seattle with Boeing and many other tech and aviation- related industry.... What sits almost smack in the middle of the two? Klamath County.

Today, you have an opportunity to re-imagine the future of rural Oregon. You have the opportunity to promote new

industry, new investment, new jobs and hope. I ask your support of House Bill 3206.