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**Senate Revenue Committee
Testimony in Support of SB 378
April 5, 2017
Don Thompson, President
Oregon Fire District Directors Association**

The Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA) was formed in 1950 and serves the elected public officials of over 200 Fire Protection Districts throughout Oregon, all Special Districts formed under ORS Chapter 478. The five-member governing boards are responsible for the financial and management oversight of the Districts. They serve without compensation.

The attraction and retention of volunteer firefighters has been a top priority for the fire service, both in Oregon and across the United States for a number of years. FEMA has published booklets on how to attract and retain volunteers and governors have formed task forces to study the issue.

When Oregonians pay their taxes, they have the option of checking a box that allows a portion of their return to go to a charitable organization. SB 378 would remove the \$1 million requirement to be included in this program by providing an exception for the OVFA as the legislature has done for similar organizations such as the Oregon Veterans' Home, the Nongame Wildlife Fund, the Alzheimer's Disease Research Fund and the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund. This would not set a precedent. The bill would not grant any other special consideration to the OVFA.

The OFDDA believes that SB 378 represents a small step forward in assisting volunteers. For small rural fire protection districts in particular, volunteers are the life blood of their communities and often the first responders to fires, traffic accidents and other potential tragedies.

As the number of volunteers dwindles at an alarming level, it is up to us as elected officials to make policy decisions that will provide incentives and increase training. SB 378 accomplishes this objective.

On behalf of the elected officials of Oregon's Rural Fire Protection Districts, we urge your support of SB 378 and we thank you for hearing our testimony. And, while we are appreciative of the Public Hearing, we respectfully ask that SB 378 be scheduled for a work session in the House Revenue Committee as soon as possible.
