

The Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau is a non-profit organization cooperating with the National Park Service (NPS) in the preservation, stewardship and improvement of the cultural and natural resources of the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.



Representative Nathanson, Chair
House Committee on Revenue
900 Court Street., NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 4047 Support, State Transient Lodging Tax

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Reschke and members of the House Revenue Committee:

Board of Directors

Bernie Thurber,
Chairman
Ron Fox,
Vice Chair
Kasey Holwerda,
Secretary
Carolyn Wheatley
JMolly Spencer
Joan Palmer
Karen Case
Charles Davis
Scott Robson

On behalf of the **Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau** (Friends), I am urging your support of HB 4047. This bill would lift the sunset on the state transient lodging tax (TLT) rate and maintain the current level of investment in Oregon's tourism industry.

The Friends hold an official partnership agreement with the National Park Service (NPS) and support the **Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve**. This property – in rural Southwestern Josephine County – supports 70 jobs – and is of critical economic value to the region. With the support from Travel Oregon grant program which this investment supports – the Friends and NPS have been able to bring a \$20 million project into Josephine County. This project is restoration of the National Historic Landmark lodge – the **Oregon Caves Chateau**. Once complete, the restored Chateau is expected to increase visitor numbers in that part of the state by 10% each year and to bring a minimum of \$1 million additional support to the region annually.

Sue Densmore
Executive Director

The NPS will fund and complete a \$17 million Life Safety and Accessibility upgrade over the next two years while the Friends are responsible for the restoration of the historic character of the lodge – a \$3 million dollar effort. A \$100,000 grant from **Travel Oregon**, funded by the TLT, was the leverage we needed to kick off this effort. It allowed us to begin the development of the **Historic Furnishings Plan** and **Monterey Furniture** restoration project. It was the seed money needed to begin to raise the remaining \$3 million needed to complete the restoration. The Friends were also fortunate to receive \$750,000 from the **Cultural Advocacy Coalition** – in their request to the Legislature in 2017 to re-create the balconies.

Jeremy Curtis
Superintendent

Without the current state TLT 1.8% rate, Travel Oregon would not have the funding to support critical regional projects like the restoration of the **National Treasure** – the **Oregon Caves Chateau**.

The Friends Board members and myself would be happy to share more details on how our community has benefited directly from TLT funding and would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to your support of HB 4047 and the investments it has made in the quality of life in rural Oregon.

Warm regards,

Sue Densmore
Executive Director.