

Oregon needs to take urgent action to mitigate and prepare for wildfires. Shortly after the wildfires near the California and Oregon borders were extinguished I drove through the impacted areas and saw entire towns destroyed. Nothing remained but brick chimneys on the ground. Lives, jobs, and homes were lost. I stood in the middle of what used to be a large forest and all I could see were charred trees for miles. On the drive out, we passed abandoned communities that looked like they had been hit by bombs. These communities were now deserted. Many of the forests that burned were natural landscapes that I took for granted throughout my life. They are all places we have visited to enjoy nature throughout the years and they no longer exist. Wildfires destroyed not just our trees but also our streams, our water sources have been jeopardized. Rural communities and families with homes in the wildland urban interface need our help.

The legislature must rely on science-based best practices that will make our communities and landscapes more resilient. The state has discussed this issue for several years, in the Governor's Wildfire Council and in the legislature, and now it's time to act. SB 762 provides a forward-looking, comprehensive approach to achieve community preparedness and wildfire risk reduction. We can't wait for another wildfire season to go by without getting started on this important work.