

We are submitting this testimony in support of an extension of time for meeting the regulatory time limitations imposed on the rebuilding of our home in Blue River, Oregon, which was destroyed in the Holiday Farm fire. Passage of Senate Bills 405 and 465 can serve to avoid the extreme prejudice of unavoidable loss, with little, or no, adverse impacts, within the existing regulatory scheme.

I am a longtime resident (almost 50 years) of Lane County, and, my wife, Laura, is a fourth generation Oregonian (all of her great-grandparents arrived pre-Statehood). We've worked and paid taxes (Oregon income taxes, property taxes, etc.) in Lane County, since the 1970s. I retired several years ago, for health reasons, and Laura retired recently to care for me. We have both conducted our lives consistent with our appreciation of, and commitment to, keeping Oregon a uniquely wonderful place to live. Recent catastrophic events, i.e., the Western Oregon wildfires and the Covid-19 pandemic, have struck at the very core of the fundamental values, social and environmental, contributing to our quality of life. It is not merely a loss of the "good life" that we are experiencing, but serious hardship, at a time in our lives in which we are least able to cope with it. The stories, told to us by relatives, about their personal experiences with, and the life-changing consequences from, the Western Oregon wildfires of the Tillamook Burn, that occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s, noted the "pioneer" resilience and perseverance with which the imposed hardships were met, but they emphasized the extraordinary sustained community-wide efforts toward mutual support, recovery and restoration. It's as though the response to the disasters left as much, or more, of a lasting impression than disasters themselves. Laura remembers the profound feeling of civic responsibility that she felt, as a child, when her grade school class went on a field trip, in the 1950s, to plant trees on State forest land which had been burned in the Tillamook Burn.

Both Laura and I want to emphasize how important an extension of time, such as the one contemplated in Senate Bills 405 and 465, is at this critical time. Our home in Blue River was destroyed in the Holiday Farm Fire. The challenging tasks of recovery and rebuilding have been substantially complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic. As older individuals, with serious pre-existing health conditions, we are pre-disposed to particularly adverse outcomes (death), if we contract the virus, and because I am immune compromised, more susceptible, if exposed. The limitations, imposed upon us by the social isolation required, in order for us to remain safe during the pandemic, have rendered the necessary actions in the recovery and rebuilding process practically impossible for us to undertake. We have been hesitant to meet and work with the various professionals needed to assist us in the process. Our only vehicle is overdue for maintenance, further limiting our mobility, and we are reluctant to take it in for service until a vaccine becomes available. It has been over five months since the catastrophic wildfire, and we are still awaiting the official cleanup of the extensive ash and debris on our property caused by the fire (which is a preliminary step in the recovery and rebuilding process). Looming regulatory deadlines only serve to create additional worry and stress to that experienced, as a result of the hardship and loss caused by the twin disasters of wildfire and pandemic. The emergency relief afforded by Senate Bill 465 will not significantly undermine the public policy goals of the time limitation regulations that the Bill proposes one-time extensions for, and it can serve to substantially reduce unfairness and hardship for those Oregonians who are victims of circumstances beyond their control. Passage of Senate Bills 405 and 465 can serve to avoid the extreme prejudice of unavoidable loss, with little, or no, adverse impact, within the existing regulatory scheme. Thank you.

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