



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

House Committee on Revenue

Chair Nathanson
Vice Chair Pham
Vice Chair Reschke

Chair and the House Committee Members on Revenue

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council and our organization represents over 3700 career fire fighters and paramedics throughout Oregon.

We testify today in support Senate Bill 1582A. This bill certainly has many different avenues to ponder for your committee. For your fire fighters this bill levels the playing field as it relates to paying “your fair share” or carrying the weight for services rendered. Some have commented on “tax oppression” or a taxation “without representation” and almost in the same sentence speaking the right to opt out of fire tax altogether.

All Oregonians are part of a society that prides it’s self on self-reliance until they need assistance of a magnitude that is incomprehensible. We think that is the case when a home or business catches fire in our respective districts. It is this “contract” of service that the voters passed with their Rural Fire District that relies on everyone paying their fair share. Measure 47/50, Measure 5 caps on millage rates, understaffed fire apparatus, limited volunteers all make delivering an effective fire fighting force very trying.

SB 1582A is a fairness bill and a service bill in one piece of legislation. You will go for a long drive in Oregon to find an adequately staffed career or volunteer workforce. We don’t think Almeda, Holiday Farm and the other 7 fires were anomalies just of 2020.



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The number of fire fighters on duty every day in Oregon is dangerously low. Taxpayers must hold their elected officials accountable and be honest about what they can do in case of fire. We think SB 1582 does just that. As a taxpayer you have a duty to let your fire board know what you want for service and what you can afford. Involvement is how a society works. Speaking to your elected fire district directors works.

We witnessed tremendous act of heroism and some of those stories will live on forever. What we cannot allow is a relatively small group of landowners not be part of a society that singularly takes their own lack of payment as a personal choice. The Interface fire problem is here and not going away anytime soon. Our service levels are declining, our population is increasing our effective fire fighting force is declining. This legislation requires those properties join society and participate in Oregon's fire protection grand plan.

Please support your fire fighters and move SB 1582A out of committee and onto the House Floor.

Respectfully,

Karl Koenig s/s

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