

## **Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness**

### **SB 200**

**Salvage Chief (USS LSM 380, WWII) Request**

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### **Senator Brian Boquist and Senator Suzanne Weber-**

I've been fortunate to serve Emergency Management roles here in the Pacific Northwest, in Australia, Colombia and New Zealand. There are themes common to each society I've experienced.

As honorable members of this essential committee you serve, I believe you each are already well familiar with the looming, abstract idea we now understand and call the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake. There is no way to make the unfathomable, real, tactile, to those we serve, our public whom thank God, have not experienced a plus 9 magnitude earthquake, yet.

But we have experienced previous unimaginables in the Pacific Northwest- the eruption of our Mount Saint Helens. The Manzanita tornado. 500 year floods striking Vernonia and other communities back-to-back. Not that we logically know such things can't happen, we just don't believe they will happen here, to us, in our 'now' despite the evidence.

This is the common thread binding each culture I've experienced: whether we imagine it won't happen in our lifetime, whether we feel too overwhelmed to handle another worry, or whether we think it's someone else's job to worry and plan- there exists this general theme the bad thing won't happen.

What do we do about it?

Innovation is an Oregon value, something we excel in; seeking new answers to ongoing challenges- just look at the Bottle Bill. Recycling, repurposing our resources to serve a new need instead of throwing a "used up" container aside.

Your committee is aptly and interestingly named: the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness. What a fantastic pairing.

Veterans and Emergency Preparedness. This is not an accidental pairing. To my mind, and I'm certain to others, it's a perfect union. A veteran is someone whom served our Nation's military.

Trained. Skilled. Purposed. Often giving far more than should ever be asked. Upon separation, we re-label that talent, that purposeful soul, a veteran.

This conversation today is about re-labeling another veteran. Putting her WWII soul to good, honorable purpose. The Salvage Chief, is simply a rather unique veteran. But Oregon is thankfully accustomed, skilled to innovate the unique.

The Salvage Chief provides a unique platform- she has the capacity to provide power, water, river debris clearing. Keenly, she has the capacity to serve our communities as an Emergency Operations Center, coordinating response and recovery communications up and down the Columbia River.

Our worst case scenario is yes, the expected Cascadia Subduction Earthquake. Columbia County OR, Cowlitz County WA, and those more rural counties westward to the ocean understand we will not be first on the response list. We are not the epicenters of population.

Our bridges westward are forecasted to fail. Our roads are expected to fail. Rail. All impacted and impassable. The one highway which will still be readily viable, will be the one highway key in the very settlement of our Oregon: the Columbia River Maritime Highway.

With her shallow draft, her winches, power, her communications hubs, the Salvage Chief will be key in re-opening the Columbia River Maritime Highway, key to enabling resources and commerce to re-enter our region again. No other vessel has her ability. No other veteran can serve this unique mission.

Between now and then, what? As you may know, if we “prepare for one, we ready for the other” disaster. Cowlitz County WA and Columbia County OR partner informally in mutual aid. We share resources, information, a river. We each wish to access the service capacities of the Salvage Chief to exercise response and recovery between our shared river highway. We need the help of SB 200 to ready the Salvage Chief; to enable her to independently travel the Columbia River Maritime Highway and work with our communities toward building our readiness, our resiliency together.

We understand the Salvage Chief is older than she used to be, but she’s not done yet. Like any other veteran she has more to give. SB 200 funds bringing her into service once again and we humbly ask you to support SB 200.

Ready the Chief; Ready our Now, Ready our Future