

SB 864 – In support of

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and committee, my name is Eric Kranzush. I am a professional Forester at Giustina Land & Timber Co. in Eugene, Oregon. Giustina Land & Timber Co. is a 4th generation family-owned Oregon business practicing long term sustained yield forestry. It is a great honor to provide Oregonians with clean air, clear water, abundant wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and certified sustainably sourced forest products. I am here today to provide testimony in support of SB 864.

Wildfire knows no boundaries....unfortunately, however, our legal system does. Let me explain.

As a Forester for a private landowner, I participate in Oregon's Complete and Coordinated System for fire detection and suppression. Throughout the summer, me and fellow Foresters from across Oregon conduct fire patrols throughout our forests, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). To remain efficient and effective, we leverage ODF state radio dispatch and shared mobile tracking technology to space our patrols so that fire resources are not overlapping in common patrol blocks. Once behind gates, our interconnected road systems commonly stretch across mixed ownerships (both public and private). I routinely patrol across legal property lines on road Rights-Of-Way I have legal right to access....just as other timber company's foresters provide coverage for me in other patrol blocks. Coupled with smoke detection camera data, this "scatter and cover" approach ensures fire resources are never far away from a fire start, we can assess fire severity quickly and take immediate action to suppress the fire while additional resources are dispatched to the scene. Utilizing our "militia" in this fashion helps Oregon Department of Forestry achieve our shared goal of 98% of fires contained at 10-acres or less.

Patrolling, detecting and suppressing a fire on company land is straightforward. Report the wildfire to Oregon Department of Forestry and dispatch my company resources to extinguish the fire. In the meantime, I utilize basic training required of all forest workers under OR-OSHA Division 7 and take a safe and reasonable approach to containing the fire.

However, when I am the first on scene of a fire outside of my ownership, the process is legally cumbersome. While I would report the fire to the Oregon Department of Forestry and the landowner, Oregon law does not provide me (or my employer) with liability protection for my good faith effort to extinguish the fire while I wait for resources to arrive. While I watch the fire grow, I must decide, "is my liability risk worth my effort or should I standby and monitor until other resources arrive?" Various private landowners and contractors answer this question very differently based upon guidance from legal counsel.

In 2019, SB290 provided liability protection to volunteer firefighters who act in good faith on any agricultural lands.....Neighbors being good neighbors. SB864 extends that same protection to private forestlands. While it is true that **wildfire knows no boundaries**, passing SB864 protects my good faith efforts from liability on private forestland and ensures I can immediately take action to help keep fires small, reducing exposure to the General Fund.