



Presented By



March 23, 2023

I am writing today in support of our county fairs through HB2948.

The Jackson County Fairground and Exposition Park is the mass gathering location for most major events in the Rogue Valley throughout the entire year. They host social, cultural, recreational, agricultural, commercial and educational events annually that serve over 425,000 people in Southern Oregon. That said, county fairgrounds are enterprise business units and are expected to be self-sustaining while they serve their community's many needs.

During the last 3 years our fairground and fairgrounds in most counties of Oregon, served their communities as wildfire evacuation shelters and pandemic response centers for testing and vaccination clinics. This response to their community's need was natural and welcomed. However, while in service mode many county fairgrounds staff faced challenges with their infrastructure to serve the multi-level demands well. Emergency shelters for animals differ greatly from the sheltering demands for families. Most fairgrounds have the needed supplies and equipment for animal evacuation/emergencies. Where we fall short is the infrastructure needed to provide stable housing for families during emergencies. Many fairgrounds lack the number of restrooms, showers, and even sterile spaces to construct an emergency evacuation center if called upon. Our facility has the minimum and we were able to call in portable units for the times we needed them during the Alameda and Obenchain wildfires. The other equipment not found in many fairgrounds is the communication infrastructure to be able to communicate campus-wide during an emergency. We have small portable public address units but no overhead campus-wide public address system. It is imperative to be able to communicate quickly and concisely when you are serving masses of people who are in turmoil.

Needless to say House Bill 2948 could bring the much needed infrastructure to our counties fairgrounds for our future emergency needs. As your director of Jackson County Fairground, I would love to have the surplus funding from our annual events in order to maintain my fairground as well as make these identified upgrades. However, the current economic environment does not show the ability to make the margins needed in cash flow to be able to make these upgrades without this boost in a timely fashion.

These recent years have shown our importance in our community's economic development as well as our emergency response plans. I believe we need to ensure fairgrounds and Emergency Management's future success by passing HB2948.

Helen Baker
Director, Jackson County Fairground and Exposition Park

