

Submitter: Melinda Tackitt
On Behalf Of: Melinda and John Tackitt
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure: SB1520

To those concerned:

I am writing this testimony to you today in support of SB 1520, the bill addressing Oregon's tax subtraction for survivors of wildfire.

My husband and I survived the 2018 "Camp Fire" in California that destroyed the town of Paradise, as well as multiple surrounding communities. 18,000 structures were lost, about 14,000 homes. We lost our beautiful home, and knew that we would not be able to rebuild the home we previously had, due to the skyrocketing costs of construction as well as our age and health. We chose to move to Oregon and purchase a home instead.

The civil action against PG&E resulted in the power company declaring bankruptcy, and a finite amount of settlement monies to divide among approximately 70,000 claims. Determinations were issued for claimants, but in the end there is not enough revenue to cover the claims in full. Thus far, 60% has been provided to claimants, and the Fire Victims Trust is unsure what will be available for the final payment... 10% or 15% more, maybe. Along with the reduced settlement to make survivors "whole", were the fees paid to attorneys, of which taxes were owed by the claimants. These are taxes owed on money never seen by the claimants, in addition to the taxes owed on the rest of the settlement money received. This is far from making folks "whole". In fact, it often results in reductions of Social Security benefits.

The federal government is currently looking at a bill similar to the bill in Oregon, whereas taxes would not be owed on monies recouped after a wildfire settlement. We are hoping for a good outcome with both the federal and state governments in these matters. The passage of these bills would allow us to move forward in our lives without the continued financial tensions, in addition to the already existing challenges associated with our profound loss.

We are requesting your most careful consideration in the passage of this bill, for the many of us in the State of Oregon healing from the damages of wildfires caused by negligence.

Melinda and John Tackitt
Jacksonville, Oregon