

Submitter: Estelle Voeller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure: SB1593

Senator Meek and Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee

SB 1593-3 Study of a severance tax on timber - Support

I am a rural landowner in Jackson County, one of many who abruptly evacuated during the 2020 Labor Day fires. I was lucky; I returned to find home and farm intact. Many friends lost everything. I ask you to address the need for wildfire risk reduction with urgency.

We are already experiencing hotter, and more unpredictable weather events, with less snowpack to carry us through our dry summers. Climate scientists warn that this trend is expected to get worse. We need increased and sustained investment to prepare and protect our communities, critical infrastructure and vulnerable populations, as well as effective suppression where it is warranted.

I support this study bill to look at the discontinued severance tax that previously supplied resources for fire management, as well as essential funding for counties. Ownership patterns of forest land have changed over the past few decades. It is apparent now that some large corporations are not paying their fair share of taxes, nor is our state fairly benefiting from the valuable resources they are extracting. With Oregon's lack of campaign finance limits, vested interests can have outsized influence on policies. A study of the pros and cons of reinstating severance taxes instead of harvest taxes makes complete sense as a fair way to provide increased and sustained funding.

I appreciate that the system of funding streams and receiving entities is very complex, and much effort has been going into creating a way to fund and scale mitigation efforts. I urge fairness and equity be part of the solution, as the tiered tax proposals would facilitate. In addition credit for practices which sequester carbon and create more healthy forest ecosystems is commendable.

I urge you to pass SB 1593-3 this session, so critical information will be available before the 2025 Legislative Session begins.

Thank you for your consideration.

Estelle Voeller