

Enrolled

Senate Resolution 2

Sponsored by Senator GIROD

Whereas during World War II, Aurora Flight Strip was built in northern Marion County, Oregon, by the United States Army Air Forces; and

Whereas the new facility was completed in 1943 and was used as a base for patrolling the coast for enemy ships and aircraft, for pilot training and as a supporting airfield to Portland Army Air Base; and

Whereas following the war, the airfield was eventually turned over to the control of the State of Oregon by the federal government; and

Whereas Aurora State Airport is today a general aviation airport owned and operated by the Oregon Department of Aviation, and it is one of the busiest airports in the state; and

Whereas Aurora State Airport covers an area of 144 acres, making it the largest of Oregon's state-owned airports; and

Whereas in 2009, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution naming the airstrip Wes Lematta Field at Aurora State Airport in honor of the late founder of Columbia Helicopters, Inc., which is based at the airport; and

Whereas Aurora State Airport is uniquely positioned to provide enormous assets to the Willamette Valley, the State of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest region following a major seismic event or other cataclysmic natural disaster; and

Whereas soil studies at the airport predict a negligible soil settlement following a major seismic event, which indicates that the runway, taxiways and parking aprons will likely remain fully operational with very little needed repair; and

Whereas the airport is a major headquarters and base of operations for two of the largest heavy-lift helicopter companies in the United States, Columbia Helicopters, Inc., and Helicopter Transport Services, which will provide essential supply transportation services following a major disaster; and

Whereas the airport is the regional headquarters for Life Flight Network, the principal emergency air medical service for the northwestern United States, and whose services will be critical to the people of the region following a disaster; and

Whereas the airport is the base of operations for two companies that specialize in repair and adjustment of major electrical grid power lines: Wilson Construction Company and Winco Powerline Services; and

Whereas these resiliency-critical businesses all have major aircraft maintenance facilities at the airport for their specialized aircraft, with ready-to-use test equipment, rebuild machines, spare parts inventory, tools, skilled aircraft maintenance workforce, specialty aviation accessories and aero-medical equipment in fully functional condition for use during an emergency; and

Whereas the airport is a base for the Oregon Disaster Airlift Response Team, which is an all-volunteer airlift resource whose mission is to help communities and emergency responders cope with a local disaster; and

Whereas the airport is home to the Aurora Composite Squadron, Oregon Wing, of the United States Air Force Auxiliary's Civil Air Patrol, which provides essential search and rescue and emergency response operations; and

Whereas the airport is surrounded by agricultural lands that during an emergency can be repurposed as staging areas for use in emergency management operations; and

Whereas the airport was constructed as a military airport and its runway was designed to be capable of landing heavy military-type aircraft; and

Whereas the airport has more than 1 million square feet of aviation hangar, office and shop space that can be quickly transitioned for emergency management operations; and

Whereas numerous federal, state and local emergency management plans document the importance of the airport as an essential resiliency facility; and

Whereas the Aurora Airport Improvement Association continues to further develop plans and infrastructure so that Aurora State Airport can better serve its vital role as a resiliency facility to resupply and support the people of the State of Oregon following a major seismic event or other cataclysmic natural disaster; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Senate of the Eighty-third Legislative Assembly, recognize the important role of Aurora State Airport in the State of Oregon's emergency preparedness and response efforts, and we salute the work of the Aurora Airport Improvement Association in ensuring that the airport fulfills its vital role.

Adopted by Senate June 4, 2025

Obadiah Rutledge, Secretary of Senate

Rob Wagner, President of Senate