



APPLEGATE FIRE DISTRICT

1095 UPPER APPLEGATE RD. JACKSONVILLE, OR 97530
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March 26, 2025

The Honorable Dan Rayfield, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Rob Wagner, Senate President

RE: Support for Capital Construction Request – ECSO 911 Radio Infrastructure Project

Dear Speaker Rayfield and President Wagner,

As Fire Chief of Applegate Valley Fire District, I am writing to express my strong support for the Capital Construction Request on behalf of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO 911) and the critical countywide public safety radio infrastructure build-out currently underway.

Applegate Valley Fire District is a large, rural, multi-station fire protection district covering over 270 square miles in southwestern Jackson County. We serve a mix of rugged terrain, remote communities, and wildland-urban interface zones that are among the most fire-prone in the state. As Vice President of the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association and a 27-year veteran of Oregon fire service, I can say without hesitation that modernizing our regional emergency communications system is one of the most important investments we can make for public safety.

Our district, like many in the region, depends heavily on ECSO 911 for emergency dispatch and coordination during both routine and large-scale incidents. The current radio infrastructure, much of which is outdated and degraded by our region's topography and climate, poses a daily challenge to effective communication among field personnel and partner agencies. In wildfire events—like those that devastated southern Oregon in recent years—these communication limitations can place lives, property, and responders at even greater risk.

ECSO 911 has been a responsible steward of public trust and funding. Following extensive study and planning, they successfully passed a \$28 million bond measure with voter approval in 2019. Construction has since progressed, but like many public projects across the state, ECSO is now facing a budget shortfall due to inflation, supply chain issues, and unforeseen infrastructure costs. This funding gap, if left unaddressed, threatens to delay completion and jeopardize the full implementation of the upgraded system.

Applegate Valley Fire relies on seamless interoperability with our regional partners—Jackson County Sheriff's Office, ODF, neighboring fire districts, and federal resources—especially

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during extended mutual aid and wildland incidents. The ability to communicate clearly, consistently, and reliably across agencies and terrain is not a luxury—it is a necessity. The completion of this project is vital to ensuring our first responders can do their jobs safely and effectively, and that the public receives timely and coordinated emergency services.

On behalf of Applegate Valley Fire District, I respectfully urge the Oregon Legislature to fully support the Capital Construction Request for ECSO 911. The citizens of this region have already demonstrated their commitment to public safety by passing the bond. We now ask the State to help ensure this essential system is completed without compromise or delay.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Wolfard

Chris Wolfard
Fire Chief