

Submitter: James Cavin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3489

The cost of climate change isn't theoretical. It's not far off in the future. It's here, it's burning, and in Oregon, it's burning not only our forests, but also our budgets and our sense of fairness.

HB 3489 is not a new idea. It's a necessary one. It's a proposal that says: If you profit from Oregon's forests, you should help protect them. That's not radical, it's just common sense.

Right now, the largest timber companies in Oregon—some of them backed by Wall Street investors and pulling in hundreds of millions in profits—are paying just a fraction of the cost to protect their own land from wildfire. That cost is being shifted to the taxpayers—at a time when wildfire seasons are growing more frequent, more intense, and more expensive. In 2024, Oregon spent approximately \$350 million fighting wildfires. That's not a one-off. That's part of a larger trend, and it's not sustainable.

HB 3489 proposes reinstating a timber severance tax—a tool Oregon once used and many other states still do. It's a way to ensure that those who benefit most directly from our forests are also investing in their long-term protection. It's not about punishment, it's about partnership and aligning private profit with public good.

This isn't just about fighting fires after they start—it's about preventing them in the first place. One-third of the revenue generated by this policy would go to the Oregon State Fire Marshal, directly funding community wildfire prevention and resilience. These are the kinds of proactive investments that don't just save money—they save lives, homes, ecosystems, economies. Another third would go directly to timber counties, for unrestricted local use. These are the communities that have long lived alongside the timber industry. They've shouldered the costs. They deserve to share more fully in the benefits.

The final third helps ensure that when the next fire season hits—and we know it will—we're not scrambling to cover the basics. We're ready. That's what a fair, functioning system looks like, because Oregon's wildfire reality has changed. Our tax structure hasn't kept up. Continuing to subsidize high-profit timber corporations at the expense of rural communities, small landowners, and public services is not just unfair, it's bad economics.

Policy, at its best, is an expression of our values. And HB 3489 expresses a value we

need more of right now: shared responsibility. If you take from a place, you contribute to its protection. If you profit from a resource, you help sustain it.

That's what this bill does. And I urge you to pass it—for Oregon's forests, for its communities, and for a future that's safer, more resilient, and more just.