



Crook County

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT to HB 4148A. For the record, I am Brian Barney, Crook County Commissioner testifying on behalf of Crook County.

House Bill 4148, would allow counties to **allocate up to 50% of TLT revenues to local government general funds and at least 50% to tourism promotion**, instead of the current state-mandated split that prioritizes tourism spending over essential local services.

Our community welcomes visitors year-round, and tourism plays an important role in our local economy. But the influx of tourists also places a **significant burden on our local infrastructure, public safety systems, and essential services** — costs that are not covered by current TLT revenue distribution splits.

If HB 4148A passes, the increased funds would allow us to:

- Invest in **emergency response and public safety**, which are strained during peak tourist seasons.
- Support **local parks, trails, and public restrooms** used heavily by visitors but maintained by county dollars.
- Fund **road maintenance and transit options** that see higher wear and usage from visitor traffic.
- Expand **affordable housing and workforce services** impacted by the seasonal economy.
- Develop **small business grant programs** to support our restaurant and lodging industry.
- Bolster **community resilience** in the face of fire seasons, extreme weather, or natural disasters that are often exacerbated by tourist presence.

During the summer recreational season, Crook County Fire and Rescue experiences a substantial increase in emergency service demand. During the recreational season call volume rises resulting in an estimated 70 additional emergency responses to recreational areas located outside the district. These areas include reservoirs, mountain regions, campgrounds, lakes, and other outdoor destinations that attract seasonal visitors.

This surge in emergency activity corresponds with data from the Crook County Road Department, which reports a 15 percent increase in traffic on county roads serving key recreational corridors. These routes provide primary access to state and county parks, campgrounds, reservoirs, lakes, and mountain areas. The increase in roadway traffic

underscores the direct impact that seasonal tourism and outdoor recreation have on local emergency services and transportation infrastructure.

Further trend analysis from the Crook County Sheriff's Office covering the years 2021 through 2025 reinforces this pattern of sustained recreational growth within the county's natural resource areas, including mountain streams, rivers, and reservoirs. Over this five-year period, which includes drought conditions in 2024 calls for service related to recreational activity have increased by an average of 12.6 percent annually, with a notable 28.5 percent increase in the most recent year alone.

In addition, marine enforcement activity reflects this upward trend. In 2025, deputies conducted 600 boat contacts, representing a 4.17 percent increase over the previous average of 576 contacts. This continued rise in recreational use highlights the growing demand placed on public safety resources during peak seasons.

Collectively, these data points demonstrate a clear and sustained seasonal impact on emergency response services, roadway infrastructure, and law enforcement operations throughout Crook County's outdoor recreation areas.

The intent of TLT is to benefit communities and businesses impacted by tourism — not solely to promote more of it. Yet the current formula locks local governments into spending patterns that may no longer reflect our most urgent needs. **HB 4148 restores local discretion and allows each community to meet the dual goals of supporting tourism and maintaining livability.**

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for supporting local governments' ability to serve residents and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

X 

Brian Barney
County Commissioner