

To Whom It May Concern:

I have concerns with giving the State Fire Marshal TWENTY-FIVE new positions. Being in fire service and an Oregon taxpayer I have followed the fire related bills and have never heard any justification as to why they need so many positions. You can give them 25 positions or 500 positions, but it will not affect how structural firefighters handle wildfires.

I heard her say that they don't have capacity to handle "suppression". The OSFM does not have any suppression duties. They do not have employees that do suppression. That is strictly a fire department firefighter duty. This is so insulting to fire service for her to talk about the need for suppression capacity.

I also heard her testify that they only have about 1.5 task forces to serve for conflagrations. That is very false. There has been many times over the years that fire service has provided firefighters for strike teams/task forces for two conflagrations simultaneous. 2018 and 2020 as the most recent years example where fire personnel supported three conflagrations with full task forces. So her statements are very misleading. There has never been a time where a conflagration was declared and Oregon did not have firefighters to send. That would be big media news. But EVEN if that was an issue, funding OSFM with 25 new employees is NOT going to help suppress fires and save communities. The millions you want to give OSFM for positions that are irrelevant to wildfires would be better served by helping fund firefighter positions and equipment for fire departments.

It is insulting that Rep Grayber keeps thanking the state fire marshal for her service (who has never set foot and worked one day at a fire department). Up until she became chief deputy fire marshal the fire marshal and chief deputy fire marshal NEVER went to the fires. There was no reason, as there is no reason for them to get paid to hang around the fire camps. Basically what OSFM does for a conflagration is sit in their office and based on what the Incident Commander (who is a seasoned firefighter) for that fire feels he needs for strike teams or task forces he will have OSFM staff call the fire defense board chiefs with the request. The fire defense board chief does all the work in putting together a task force. Then the fire defense board chief lets the OSFM know who is going to the fires. The OSFM tracks when they leave and when they get back so they can pay them. The Incident Commander has complete control of operations of the wildfire and tactics that will be used for suppression. OSFM has NO say in how a wildfire is handled. It is frustrating to see OSFM act like they are the leaders in wildfire suppression. It is ALL fire service doing the work.

Boots on the ground for fire prevention in communities that she talks about is being done by OSU, and many counties. Deschutes county has a dedicated Community Risk Reduction position that handles this. They are well prepared for wildfire. Medford and Ashland have a great community preparedness program. There has never been one analysis on how many community preparedness and risk reduction programs that are already being done around the state, so why not put a task force together to determine what is already being done and what needs to be done before just passing positions out to a state agency. A task force that is neutral and not guided to the fire marshal's narrative.

There are a lot of fire chiefs that are not happy with some of the fluffy positions the fire marshal is wanting. Please get more clarification as to WHY they need so many positions. What is the justification? How are these positions going to show results? How many other fire departments, local and county agencies are already doing the same work?

I hope you can get better educated as to what the REAL role of the OSFM. Fire service deserves more recognition. We do all the work.

Thank you

Nick