

There is no bill currently under consideration that I can support, but I do want to see a reinstatement of the Severance Tax on Timber.

It is vital we restore reasonable tax policies for the timber industry doing business in Oregon. I would like the original severance tax in HB2379 to apply only to REIT and TIMO corporations. The tax structure should be tiered so that those most able or who do the most harm are the ones who pay the most.

However, I also hope the legislation will be amended to return 60% of this revenue to counties where the harvest occurred. All local government agencies and departments dedicated to watershed protection, law enforcement, libraries, road maintenance, public transportation, waste management, and others have been operating on insufficient funding since the timber tax structure changed in 1990's. This change was the result of undue influence by the forest industry on advisory committees and thus, our government. Meanwhile, the need for these funds at the local level has grown. We spend millions if not billions protecting forest land from wildfire or in covering the damages from those fires. These costs should be covered by those benefitting from these dollars, in the form of a fairer tax structure.

While the amount of timber harvested has remained steady for 20-25 years, the number of jobs lost has had a horrific effect on rural Oregon. This job loss is not the result of taxation! Taxes were lower over this time period! Jobs were lost due to the automation of the timber industry. But it is important to acknowledge that jobs have been lost so a portion of this revenue should go toward the retraining of timber workers.

If the timber severance tax rose to previous level, the money could be targeted by local governments to the needs of each. I can give many suggested targets but will offer three as examples. My county's population of unhoused individuals has skyrocketed in recent years. Our ability to provide humane response here in Clatsop County is restricted by a lack of funding. Secondly, there are communities here whose drinking water is threatened or has already been damaged because of logging. The industry causing the problem is not paying enough to fix any of the problems they are causing to Oregon watersheds. Finally, the money can provide assistance to small tract forest owners who have losses due to fire and need help with replanting costs. Let's keep Oregon money in Oregon.

I would also support legislation that would reward those who use forestry practices that are supported by science to minimize harm to the environment and help mitigate the changes we will see in our lands because of climate change. One specific recommendation is extending the cutting cycle to 60 years as a minimum while allowing appropriate thinning over that cycle. The larger trees will earn as much money if not more than cutting on a shorter cycle. Lower taxation rates could be used as an incentive.

Please don't believe the fake news that this is a new tax. It is a return to what had been considered fair in the not-so-distant past. And this tax bill, when properly amended, will not harm the small timber tract owners. In fact, it will even the playing field so they can fairly compete and survive for many generations to come.  
Thank you.