



Testimony in Support: SB 1582
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
February 8, 2022
Genoa Ingram

The Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA), formed in 1950, serves the elected public officials of over 200 Fire Protection Districts throughout Oregon, all Special Districts formed under ORS Chapter 478. The five-member governing boards, who serve without compensation, are responsible for the financial and management oversight of rural fire protection districts.

The OFDDA supports SB 1582 as a fair approach to funding rural fire protection districts for the services they provide. On occasions, homes will be built just outside of a fire protection district boundary, exempting the property owner from paying taxes to the fire protection district. However, these homeowners know that, should there be a fire, the district will send firefighters regardless of the status of the property.

Under ORS 478.115, counties have the authority to determine the territory included in a rural fire protection district, subject to restrictions concerning territory within a city, water supply district, certain forestlands, railroad rights of way, and ocean shores. However, counties are not currently *required* to initiate such action. SB 1582 would address that by authorizing the Board of Directors of a rural fire protection district to annex to district lands that are within seven road miles of a fire station within the district, or that are brought within seven road miles of a fire station within a district by a new road, and that are not subject to assessments for fire protection by the district.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, opponents of what was then SB 605 testified against the bill because it “forces improved properties to be annexed into a fire protection district if those properties fall within a certain distance of a fire station”. Opponents instead favored permissive legislation that would allow landowners to *choose* whether they want to be served by a rural fire protection district and pay for those services. The latter policy is workable only if everyone does the correct thing and pays for the services they are confident they will receive if needed.

On behalf of Oregon’s rural fire protection districts, we urge you to support SB 1582.