

Submitter: Rich Raynor

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Measure: SB1582

Committee Chair Golden, Vice Chair Kennemer, and committee members; I am providing written testimony in support of SB1582.

As you are well aware, under current law and statute, property owners can choose to not be a part of a Rural Fire Protection District even though their property is located within the boundaries of the district. This situation creates a huge liability issue for the RFPD, and is not at all fair to those who pay the taxes to support the RFPD. The district, by law, can only provide services to those who are a part of the district. When we have a situation where one parcel is paying for services, and the neighboring parcel is not, it creates an untenable situation for the emergency responders to determine who to provide services to, and who can they not provide those services to.

The argument has been made that the RFPD should just not show up to the property that isn't covered, but who is going to be responsible for making that determination and who is going to be liable when the information regarding coverage status is not correct and service is not provided, when it should have been, because a property was incorrectly shown to not be covered, when in fact it was covered? To think such a situation would never happen is not realistic.

Another argument we hear is "Just bill me for the services if/when I need them". If everyone took this stance, there would be no one to respond and bill. No one to use the Jaws of Life to cut someone out of their mangle automobile and provide emergency medical treatment before they die. No one to respond to a blaze to keep it from spreading and destroying lives and property.

Ask yourselves, "How would I feel if one of my loved ones needed emergency help and there was no trained and equipped emergency personnel to respond?"

Just as all property owners are required to support education and law enforcement funding, all should be required to support emergency services as proved by the rural fire districts throughout the state. The rural fire districts are much more than firefighters. They provide emergency medical care, search and rescue services, law enforcement support and more.

Please support the existence of available emergency services by supporting this bill.