

March 6, 2023

Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Oregon State Capitol

Dear Co-Chairs Taylor and Bonham and members of the Senate Labor and Business Committee:

For the record, my name is Greg Leo, a resident of Butteville, not far from St. Paul, the home of the eighty-seventh 4th of July St. Paul Rodeo.

I am an Oregon rodeo fan and have enjoyed Oregon rodeo my entire life.

Thank you for hearing SB 1038, a bill to support the facility infrastructure needs of community-based rodeos in Oregon.

My 'home' rodeo offers an example of why SB 1038 is necessary.

The annual St. Paul Rodeo transforms the small town of 425 residents into the epicenter of professional rodeo in Oregon during the 4th of July "Cowboy Christmas", with a full house of around 10,500 rodeo attendees most nights. The St. Paul Rodeo ranks in the Top Ten of regular season rodeos in the country. It is an amazing week where most of the neighbors volunteer to make this event a success. In 2019, over 56,000 visitors came to St. Paul over 'rodeo week'. We expect 2023 to be about the same.

The historic St. Paul Rodeo Arena, most of it made of wood, was constructed in 1944, and has been improved as available funds allowed over the years. Over the winter of 2023, the entire F Section was torn down and is being rebuilt to meet modern standards, including fire safety and ADA compliance. There is much more to do to update this well-used and much-loved arena.

Each year the St. Paul Rodeo Board makes needed improvements to the seventy-nine year old wooden arena with proceeds from tickets, food and beverage sales. There is never quite enough to make all of the needed improvements.

On July 5th, the day after the 2023 five-day run ends, as they do every year, local farmers will begin planting grass again for the St. Paul Buckaroos 1A football team to play in the arena throughout the fall. Our hardworking rodeo arena is a source of civic pride and the heart of our community.

The same story, on a smaller scale is repeated in rural communities throughout Oregon.

Oregon Rodeos are important community gatherings for many rural Oregonians. They bring people together to celebrate our western traditions and also a place to share this sport with many Oregon visitors. Urban or rural, Oregonians love their rodeos.

Oregon rodeos are economic engines for the communities they serve by bringing visitors and business to our communities, during the rodeo and related community events. Rodeo fans purchase food, beverage, and lodging that invigorate the local economies. They also become a place of connection for family, friends and neighbors. Old friends gather, new friends are met.

Oregon rodeos are true community events where community volunteers come together under the dedicated leadership of a local board to organize and stage events. For the most part, there are few paid staff and many dedicated community volunteers who plan all year, and work all day and night when the rodeo is held in their town.

Many Oregon community rodeo venues are aging and need capital improvements, including new bleachers, repairs to aging buildings, livestock pens, public restrooms, and other infrastructure and event facilities. Capitol improvement funding is hard to come by in many of these smaller Oregon rural communities. HB 1038 will improve event safety by updating facilities and providing much-needed support to modernize and make basic repairs to these community event venues.

In many communities, as in St. Paul, the rodeo facilities also function as gathering places and event spaces for other activities throughout the year.

To prepare for today's hearing, I did a little research:

There are 56 Oregon Rodeos listed on the Travel Oregon website, though there may be additional rodeos not listed here:

<https://traveloregon.com/things-to-do/events/culture-heritage-events/rodeo-roundup/>

Oregon's rodeos fall into essentially three categories:

1. Professional rodeos associated with the Professional Rodeos Cowboy Association (PRCA) in the Columbia River Circuit <https://columbiarivercircuit.com/>

These are the big rodeos with the world class contestants.

2. Community rodeos located in small and sometimes unincorporated communities across Oregon - the *Travel Oregon Cowboy Christmas Map* has some but not all of the community rodeos we know of:

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/60209>

3. Rodeos associated with the County Fairs - at least 12 are found on the Travel Oregon map, affiliated with Oregon's 36 County Fairs: <https://www.oregonfairs.org/p/directory>

All of Oregon's rodeos could use assistance with facilities, but the need is greatest in the community rodeos in towns, unincorporated areas and tribal reservations in Oregon's rural places. A grant program where community size and facility need are the main criteria makes sense in my view.

For me, the Oregon summer is framed by the 4th of July Rodeo in St. Paul, a few days after Legislative Sine Die, and end-of-summer gathering at the Round-Up and Happy Canyon in Pendleton during the second full week of September. In between, in many smaller places around our state, Oregonians gather in aging arenas to celebrate community in the western tradition. Let's help them keep Oregon community rodeo viable for future Oregonians.

**Please vote DO PASS on SB 1038** to support Oregon Rodeos by providing grant funding for capital facility needs.

Sincerely,  
Greg Leo, rodeo fan and community volunteer

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