

# Support SB 864

## Protect Good Samaritan Firefighters

Protects volunteer firefighters operating in good faith from liability on private forestland.

During the Labor Day fires of 2020, private timber companies provided more than 650 trained employees and nearly 350 pieces of privately-owned equipment on the fire lines. Because federal and state firefighting resources were stretched so thin across Oregon and the entire western United States, private timber owners, their employees and contractors were often the *only firefighters available on large sections of fire*, fighting fire across property lines.

While the 2020 Labor Day event was an anomaly, private timber owners showing up to fight fire alongside state and federal firefighters is not. Every summer, *private landowners contribute \$14 million worth of in-kind resources* to the Oregon Department of Forestry's firefighting system, including personnel, equipment and maintenance of infrastructure like roads, gates and water sources. These critical resources make it possible for ODF to maintain their stellar record of putting out 96 percent of fires at ten acres or less.

In 2019, the Legislature approved SB 290, a bill that protects volunteer firefighters acting in good faith from liability due to damages occurring as a result of firefighting efforts on agricultural lands. SB 864 *simply extends those same protections to timberlands as well.*

### Why it's necessary

Without protection from liability, increasingly risk adverse insurance companies may *instruct private landowners to NOT cross boundary lines* to continue volunteer firefighting efforts.

This could prevent private contributions like those in the 2020 Labor Day fires, and would disrupt critical contributions to ODF's complete and coordinated system, putting *ODF's key performance measure of extinguishing 98 percent of fires at 10 acres or less at risk.*

