

Submitter: Lisa Cohen

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2948

In 2020, wildfires swept across most of Oregon, causing thousands of equestrians to evacuate their homes, barns, and properties. My husband and I were among those who had to evacuate. The process to evacuate is not easy with large animals as it is a hard drill to practice. You cannot replicate the intense heat, wind, smoke, and often flames to train animals easily to fight their fight/flight response when scared. Due to this, most people were going through this process for the first time in one of the scariest moments of their (and their animals) lives.

During this, county fairgrounds were the savior. Fair staff across Oregon opened their gates and allowed the flood of people to find safety and security in their facilities. This required immediate pen/stall set-up, non-stop water flow to keep buckets filled, storage area for trailers/tack/feed/hay, electricity to keep the lights on, fan running, tracking of animals and humans, and much more. These fairgrounds were providing these services for hundreds of animals and humans at each location.

Many of our fairgrounds across Oregon are in disrepair. Most were built decades ago and with limited funding have not been able to keep up with the maintenance needed to have well running buildings and facilities. This is not to say that fair staff does not try! These amazing, passionate people spend 24/7 managing properties to allow for things like community events, fairs, private celebrations, important meetings and more – all on a shoestring budget. However, it was apparent in 2020 and other years when natural disasters have hit Oregon, they need more financial support to continue being the refuge for humans and animals when these situations occur. There is no other type of property in Oregon that can provide what our fairgrounds do under these extreme circumstances.

On behalf of thousands of equestrians across Oregon, we urge you to please vote yes on House Bill 2948, providing additional funding opportunities for fairgrounds across Oregon to improve their facilities and be better prepared to provide Oregonians with a safe and secure place when the next natural disaster strikes.

Thanks you sincerely,
Lisa Cohen
Sisters, Oregon