



Presented By



March 23, 2023

I am writing today in support of our county fairs through HB2948.

The Jackson County Fairground and Exposition Park is the mass gathering location for most major events in the Rogue Valley throughout the entire year. They host social, cultural, recreational, agricultural, commercial and educational events annually that serve over 425,000 people in Southern Oregon. That said, county fairgrounds are enterprise business units and are expected to be self-sustaining while they serve their community's many needs.

During the last 3 years our fairground and fairgrounds in most counties of Oregon, served their communities as wildfire evacuation shelters and pandemic response centers for testing and vaccination clinics. This response to their community's need was natural and welcomed. However, while in service mode many county fairgrounds staff faced challenges with their infrastructure to serve the multi-level demands well. Emergency shelters for animals differ greatly from the sheltering demands for families. Most fairgrounds have the needed supplies and equipment for animal evacuation/emergencies. Where we fall short is the infrastructure needed to provide stable housing for families during emergencies. Many fairgrounds lack the number of restrooms, showers, and even sterile spaces to construct an emergency evacuation center if called upon. Our facility has the minimum and we were able to call in portable units for the times we needed them during the Alameda and Obenchain wildfires. The other equipment not found in many fairgrounds is the communication infrastructure to be able to communicate campus-wide during an emergency. We have small portable public address units but no overhead campus-wide public address system. It is imperative to be able to communicate quickly and concisely when you are serving masses of people who are in turmoil.

Needless to say House Bill 2948 could bring the much needed infrastructure to our counties fairgrounds for our future emergency needs. As your director of Jackson County Fairground, I would love to have the surplus funding from our annual events in order to maintain my fairground as well as make these identified upgrades. However, the current economic environment does not show the ability to make the margins needed in cash flow to be able to make these upgrades without this boost in a timely fashion.

These recent years have shown our importance in our community's economic development as well as our emergency response plans. I believe we need to ensure fairgrounds and Emergency Management's future success by passing HB2948.

Rob Holmbeck
Operations, Jackson County Fairground and Exposition Park





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82nd Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2023 Regular Session

HB 2948 -2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Prepared By: Beverly Schoonover, LPRO Analyst
Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Meeting Dates: 3/23, 3/28

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Department of Emergency Management to develop and implement infrastructure improvement grants for fairgrounds designated as emergency evacuation sites. Appropriates \$20 million to the Department for the program. Sunsets January 2, 2027. Takes effect on the 91st day, after the Legislative Assembly adjourns sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-2 Add telecommunications improvements to approved grant expenditures.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, in 2020 multiple wildfires burned over 1 million acres of land statewide. Approximately 500,000 people were under evacuation status, and more than 40,000 people had to evacuate their homes. While Oregon's fairgrounds have previously sheltered community members and livestock during emergencies, county and state fairgrounds provided lifesaving shelter to evacuees during the 2020 wildfire season.

Fairgrounds in Yamhill, Washington, Deschutes, Linn-Benton, Tillamook, Jackson, and Douglas counties and the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem became temporary shelters for wildfire evacuees, livestock, and other animals in 2020. Basic infrastructure needs like water, sewer and power are needed at evacuation shelters for the health and safety of evacuees, and to stop the spread of illness or other disease.

House Bill 2948 appropriates \$20 million to the Department of Emergency Management to develop a grant program for water, fire, and sewer infrastructure improvements at fairgrounds designated as evacuation sites. The measure requires the Department to develop a grantmaking process and requires grantees to submit annual progress reports.

Stars Shine at the expo