

**February 21, 2024 –**

**SUSAN RUDISILL, Idleyld Park, Oregon**

**TESTIMONY FOR HB 4007**

I urge your whole-hearted support for HB4007, which will benefit Oregon’s survivors of the 2020 Labor Day fires. These are families who suffered enormous losses, who are struggling to rebuild their lives, and who need all the resources possible to rebuild.

Wildfire is a disaster that keeps on taking – taking energy and resources, and leaving a in its wake severely burned soil where little will grow, or fire-damaged trees that die slowly over several years, a fractured community. The once-beautiful landscape and trails that attracted tourists and outdoor recreation-users from all over the world now looks post-apocalyptic. The part of our economy that relied on such visitors has suffered.

Settlement funds were calculated to compensate for specific losses and - in total - hardly make up for the enormous damages suffered. Taxing that amount is punitive. We really do need access to these resources in order to rebuild and restore. Recovery is expensive, from the purchase of tools with which to clear burn debris or to repair or construct houses and out-buildings, to replanting our woodlands.

While we were among the fortunate few whose homes survived, we did lose a major outbuilding, exquisite established landscaping, and several acres of mixed species forest, with a great many trees 80 to 100 feet in height. A professional forester tallied that lost value as more than half our entire settlement. After paying taxes and legal fees, we will be left with less than the value of what we lost in trees alone.

What we are left with is this severely damaged ecosystem, and barely enough money to rebuild our garage and replace its contents. A major part of the intangible value of our property was the surrounding forest, and the inspiring view. My painting. “When our World Changed”\* shows a portion of the view from our front porch as it looked immediately after the fire. Since then, more trees have died, and fallen or been felled.



Since the fire, my career as a painter has been neglected. Recovery has dominated my time, my conversations, my mental state. It has consumed most of my energy, and much of my family's financial resources. Being consumed with clean-up and recovery work, we have lost other opportunities. Since the fire, my husband has aged rapidly, and his "golden years" have been charred.

Wildfire is the disaster that keeps on ... taking. Taking energy. Taking resources. Taking more trees. Requiring more restoration work. The money that goes to fire victims – rather than to taxes—will be spent on building supplies, household goods, tools & equipment, and local contractors. How is one to be compensated for all the intangible losses?

I beseech you to please rule in favor of HB 4007. Thank you for your understanding and assistance with this matter.

- "When Our World Changed" 2002

Artist, Susan Rudisill, Idleyld Park, Oregon

Acrylic on birchwood panel, 24" x 20"