

Submitter: Debbie Barbre
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure: HB4007

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 4007.

If you will please, imagine you are 69 years old. You have found a most beautiful place to retire and for the past 11 years you have remodeled the house, planted 22 fruit trees, created a shop for making stained glass windows, built a chicken coop, thinned an overgrown forest of 8 acres and split firewood. Every summer once a week you kayak 7 miles down the Umpqua River. Other afternoons are spent reading in the pavilion by the pond.

Life is Good!

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Then one September morning something terrible happens. The Archie Creek Wildfire comes raging through burning everything to the ground. You will never see your home again. You return days later. The beautiful remodeled home is ashes and twisted metal. From inside the house we lost pictures of our children, photo albums original art, treasured family heirlooms, antique furniture, jewelry, photography, and a library of books. The stained glass shop is an unrecognizable melted glob of glass. Spouse's shop is concrete and metal parts. Chickens have been burned alive in the coop. Kayaks are gone. Pavilion is burned beyond recognition. The 8 acres of forest is what is left of blackened bare trees still smoldering. It is an unfamiliar place. Our tiny community wiped out in a few hours, never to be the same again.

The truth is we will never completely recover what we had. Our children miss out on those family heirlooms and treasured photos.

Yes, insurance has paid us what they owe, but it doesn't come close to making us whole again. With a pandemic causing shortages and prices rising, it will be difficult to recover. The lawsuit settlement should be money to build shops, replace things we lost but it will not be enough if we are taxed at present rates.

After lawyers take their third, legal incidental fees take a cut, financial holding company takes some, and taxes take even more, we will be lucky to have 20% of our original amount. Today I am speaking also for those quiet voices that are not here. So many people have lost so much and deserve to have what we have been fighting for over the past 3 years.

I feel like the fisherman in Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea. He catches a big fish and on his way back to the harbor it is destroyed by other creatures and he returns with only the skeleton.

My story is not that much different than so many others in my position. Many more in our community lost everything. Some folks had minimal insurance, some had none at all. Passage of this bill will give folks a chance to recover their physical losses after having waited over three years for much needed help.

Please do the right thing and pass HB 4007. Thank you