

SCR 33 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Rep. Owens

House Committee On Rules

Action Date: 06/12/25

Action: Be Adopted.

Vote: 7-0-0-0

Yeas: 7 - Boshart Davis, Bowman, Drazan, Elmer, Kropf, Pham H, Valderrama

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 6/12

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure recognizes and honors former Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts for her service to this state.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Gratitude for the resolution
- Appreciation for the life and service of Susan Roberts

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Susan Roberts was born and raised in Wallowa County, Oregon, and lived in multiple towns within the county. Her diverse experience within the region gave her a unique perspective on its varied communities, as well as the needs and values that drove and defined them. Her family background was rooted in agriculture and timber, industries that have historically defined the economy of Wallowa County, and this connection to the land and its traditions shaped her approach to governance, emphasizing stewardship and practical problem solving.

Susan Roberts attended elementary school in Minam and Wallowa, followed by high school in Wallowa, and she later pursued further education at a business school in Boise, Idaho, equipping herself with skills that would be vital to her extensive career in business management and public administration. Her early life instilled a strong work ethic and a sense of duty to her community, qualities that would define her career as a public servant. Before entering politics, she spent over 35 years working for or managing businesses in Wallowa County, and her occupational background provided her with practical experience in local commerce, which later informed her economic development initiatives as a county commissioner.

Susan Roberts served in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam era, from November 1967 to November 1970, and she cited that experience with pride, noting its role in shaping her core values in leadership and discipline. Her reverence for and service with the United States Marine Corps was driven, in part, by family tradition, as her father and brothers served as well. That tradition continued with her granddaughter.

Susan Roberts' entry into public service began with volunteer roles, including serving on the Enterprise School District 21 Budget Committee and the Enterprise City Budget Committee, and those early positions allowed her to develop a deep understanding of local governance and fiscal management. She also participated in various community organizations, volunteering wherever and whenever asked, further cementing her reputation as a dedicated community member. Her involvement in her community extended to boards and commissions, including the Enterprise Cemetery Maintenance District, reflecting her commitment to preserving local heritage and infrastructure.

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Susan Roberts' formal political career began in Enterprise, the county seat of Wallowa County, where she served on the City of Enterprise Planning Commission, gaining experience in land use and urban development issues. She was later elected to the City of Enterprise City Council, serving for a decade and honing her skills in policymaking and community engagement. Her tenure with the city council culminated in her election as mayor of the City of Enterprise, and during the decade she held the role, she oversaw several key projects in the community, frequently in collaboration with other local leaders. As mayor, her leadership style emphasized cooperation and community input, a philosophy she carried forward throughout her career. Her experience in city government provided her with a nuanced understanding of the differences between municipal and county governance, although she noted that the core principles of responsiveness and constituent service remained consistent.

During her time as mayor, Susan Roberts was elected president of the League of Oregon Cities, a significant honor that involved representing Oregon's cities before the Legislative Assembly. As president of the League of Oregon Cities, she visited every city in the state of Oregon, expanding her influence beyond Wallowa County and allowing her to advocate for rural communities on a state level. In 2008, she was elected as Wallowa County Commissioner, a nonpartisan role with a four-year term, and she began her first term in 2009. In her first term, much attention was paid to the dispersal of gray wolves from Idaho, and along with the Wallowa County Stockgrowers, Susan and her fellow commissioners supported the development of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, which helped refund ranchers for livestock loss when investigations proved that loss to be caused by wolves. She was on the ground herself for many of these investigations, and even bought a pair of rubber BOGS boots to wear when her river sandals weren't up for the terrain.

As county commissioner, she was instrumental in revitalizing the Wallowa County Courthouse, overseeing several upgrades to the historic building, including the installation of the Wallowa County Courthouse Fountain of Honor for the county's veterans, replacing the roof, upgrading the electrical system, adding much-needed accessibility features, including an elevator, and transforming the third floor, which had long been occupied only by squirrels and birds, into office space for commissioners and administrative staff. As a longtime believer in exercising the county's coordination status with the federal government, she, along with the other county commissioners and the Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee, routinely engaged with the United States Forest Service to provide input on project planning and implementation; and when members of the public, local government officials, and special interest groups were unhappy with the United States Forest Service's Blue Mountains Plan Revision, she traded in her BOGS for Gore-Tex chest waders and volunteered to cochair the Blue Mountains Intergovernmental Council (BIC), a new alliance of eastern Oregon agencies. Over the past six years, Susan Roberts and BIC effected key changes in the plan revision, including how it affected public land access and local economies.

Susan Roberts' love for the county's history, culture, and traditions was evident in her efforts to preserve its heritage, from protecting natural landmarks to supporting community events like the Wallowa County Fair. She always spoke fondly of her time in Wallowa County, whether visiting ranches, picking elderberries, or stopping at the Imnaha Store and Tavern for a basket of gizzards.

In May 2025, Wallowa County announced Susan Roberts' retirement, marking the end of her 15-year tenure as county commissioner and over 40 years of public service. Her vision and commitment, her tenacity and her drive, and the unflappable resolve that enabled her to forge ahead and solve problems no matter how great the challenge, will be missed in Wallowa County.