

House Bill 3150

January 31, 2025

Oregon State Senators,

As the Fire Chief of Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue and Fire Defense Board Chief of Wasco County, I am writing this letter as “written testimony” in support of House Bill 3150. In the central Columbia Rive Gorge, nearly all fire districts rely on volunteerism to contain and suppress fires, provide public education, investigate cause and origin of fires, and provide risk assessments for property owners. With diminishing volunteer ranks, the fire service has been losing depth of coverage and loss of resiliency. In May 2023, The US Fire Administration released a report detailing there were 897,750 Volunteer Firefighters in 1984, when the population of the US was estimated at 220 Million. Now, with a population estimate of over 331 Million in 2020, there were only an estimated 676,900 volunteers nationwide.

Fire Districts protecting Wasco County heavily rely on volunteer firefighters to act at a moment’s notice to defend the lives and property of their neighbors. For volunteers, this is often at their own expense. Wasco County by far the most active counties for Conflagration or other State assistance fires which take days on end to complete suppression. Our Fire District relies on its automatic and mutual agreements with the surrounding volunteer fire districts for response to large wildfires which proves its need through use, every year. These civil servants are essential to providing public safety and depth of coverage.

It is my hope that HB 3150 will be a meaningful step in helping our volunteer fire service, in that it will:

- Recognize volunteers for their own personal cost of providing services,
- Reward volunteers for productivity through the associated qualification requirements, and
- Incentivized future volunteerism

David Jensen, MPA, EFO, CFO



Fire Chief,
Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue
1400 West 8th, The Dalles, Oregon 97058