

February 11, 2015

To the Members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business & Trade,

My name is Gary Kout. I am an independent producer based in Ashland. I am also the Founder and Board President of Film Southern Oregon, a professional networking association for the film community down here.

I have been involved with filmmaking in Oregon since the start of the Oregon incentives and have experienced first hand the impact the incentives have had on my own productions, including CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD; MY NAME IS BRUCE; CALVIN MARSHALL; REDWOOD HIGHWAY; PHOENIX, OREGON, and GROWING BELUSHI. Those projects combined represent multiple millions of dollars spent in the local community on crew, cast, locations, equipment, lodging, meals, and a hundred other recipients, many of whom never even knew they were benefiting from film spending.

Without the incentives, we either would not have been able to go through with the production at all, depriving the community from all the economic activity, or would have had to scale back and not hire as many crew and cast, not rent as much gear, not have as many heads in beds, potentially harming the quality of the film and its distribution potential.

In my role with Film Southern Oregon, I have spoken to countless producers over the years interested in filming their projects in Southern Oregon. The conversation invariably turns to what incentives are offered, and I can feel their eyes light up and hear the excitement in their voice when I explain Oregon's film incentives. On multiple occasions, those films have indeed come to the area. One very recently is TIMBER LAND starring Wes Studi, whose filmmakers traditionally made their films in California or Montana, but felt that their money would go further in Oregon thanks to our incentives.

But I always have to instruct any production, including my own, to submit their application for the incentive as quickly as they can, because Oregon's incentive funds are limited, and at any moment they could be spoken for by other qualifying productions. When that happens, the production usually goes to another state that still has money in their incentive fund.

Filmmaking activity is increasing, bolstered by the proliferation of the next generation of filmmakers entering the industry, such as those coming from the nationally recognized Southern Oregon University Digital Cinema program, and fueled by the insatiable hunger of the streaming industry and its many distribution outlets.

Oregon needs to be able to welcome this increased production with a larger incentive fund and not see them turn to other states when our money runs out.

I urge you to support HB 3329. Thank you for your time.

Gary Kout
Producer, Elsewhere Films
Founder, Film Southern Oregon
Board President, Ashland Independent Film Festival