

Submitter: Jason Wilson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB771

My name is Jason Wilson, and I am in favor of SB771 that would support funding of repairs to rodeos located in rural communities of our state. I currently serve as the volunteer horse superintendent for the Coos County Fair and Rodeo located in Myrtle Point Oregon. Since 1912, the Coos County Fair has been the highlight of the summer for many youths and adults in our small rural county. The climax of this annual event is the two-night rodeo at the end of the week. Our fair ground's rodeo arena bleachers are packed with spectators who love experiencing the tradition, history, and competition of a truly amazing piece of our state's heritage and culture. The rodeo grounds could also be described as a gathering place for our rural community. Social connections are made, reunions occur, and community bonds are strengthened during these events. This was most apparent during the pandemic where the lack of socialization was of major concern. As we reflect on this period of time, one can easily make the connection as to the importance of the preservation of these events in the future. Like most rodeo grounds across the state, our rodeo grounds are always in need of continued maintenance and repair. Funds and manpower are always limited, and the constant winter rains and wind shorten the lifespan of any wooden or metal structure. The rodeo arena and grandstands at the Coos County Fairground unfortunately have suffered many setbacks over the years as the result of these elements. The historic turn of the century grandstands that showcased our fairgrounds and arena were deemed beyond repair and had to be razed in the early 1990s. This was due to lack of funding needed for the preservation of the structure. Many other historic rodeo grounds across the state are in danger of meeting the same fate as the Coos County Grandstands if efforts are not made to preserve these structures. Since this time, a small group of volunteers has made a great effort to preserve and upgrade the existing facilities. We have raised funds to replace bleachers, bucking and roping chutes, fencing, corals, an announcer's booth, and constructed a 400ft wooden fence to provide protection between the livestock and fair goers. We have also replaced the roofs of two of the three horse barns. We are currently constructing a new arena with the hopes of building a covered area to provide year-round opportunities. We are also constructing an amphitheater next to our rodeo grounds to provide a combination venue for multiple events. If additional funding was made available, the completion of these two projects could occur. During the Summer months, our arena is used daily. Horse 4-H clubs, horsemen associations, junior rodeo, private riding clinicians, competitive bull riding promoters, team roping promoters, and rodeo royalty competitors all use the arena throughout the season. As a 4-H parent and leader, I can testify as to the importance of an adequate facility to house these events. The educational component that surrounds these programs and events is invaluable to the youth that participate. A small group

of hard-working volunteers ensure the arena is maintained and is safe for all these events. Having adequate facilities that support the use and ensure the safety of participants, spectators, and animals is paramount to the success of preserving the many historic arenas and structures across rural Oregon. I am in support of this bill.