

Are MALHEUR COUNTY FAIR BOARD

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March 4, 2025

Re: HB2304, HB 2136, HB 2145, HB 2527

Dear House Committee Members,

The Malheur County Fair is one of few major events that happen in Malheur County each year. It is a way to introduce the public to agriculture, arts, self-preparedness, business and outreach for many local resources to the community. As one of the largest as well economically disadvantaged counties in the state, there are few funds that are directed towards the Fair or the grounds. Because our fair is associated with the County, we do not get to have non-profit status, though all of the funds earned are put back in to the grounds and fair. This allows for less grant opportunities for funding for improvements and upgrades. Our fair started in 1909 and many animal barns as well as the grandstands are from that era and needing replaced or major structural repair in order to continue the traditions of our agricultural past and future.

Aside from the “traditions” of our local fair, the Malheur County Fairgrounds is also the emergency shelter for the county and surrounding areas. Last year the fairgrounds housed displaced families and small animals during the fires that forced evacuations from several outlying communities and ranches. The fairgrounds are also a warming and cooling shelter for the transient and homeless population that have gravitated to this area. These people have been compelled to come here with no information or knowledge of the vast temperature variations from the more coastal cities. We offer over night housing and showers during extreme cold and heat snaps when the temperature maintains a high of 30 degrees for 3 days or more, often dipping in to the single and negative digits during the winter. This requires extra utilities in buildings that would otherwise not be in use and maintained at lower temperatures. For the fairgrounds so far, this has been a free service to the community with no funding to help cover the cost of the added expenses. In a nut shell, the Malheur County Fairgrounds is our county’s emergency evacuation location for anything from flood and fire to heat and cold. We can house many in buildings as well allow for many campers and animals on the facility, potentially with power if funded in order to purchase and maintain backup generators that could support the emergency buildings and even a portion of the camping pedestals for power and water.

Please consider these bills. They are more vital than most recognize as they have been lucky enough not to have required the use of the facilities in the case of emergency and have only spent time on the grounds at the fair when the bright lights are shining, the carnival is spinning and music is playing that one exciting week out of the year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Wood

Manager
Malheur County Fairgrounds