

On behalf of the Wheeler County Fair Board, I would like to suppress our support for HB 2304 removing the cap on the Oregon Lottery dollars that are designated for the benefit of Oregon fairs and fairgrounds.

Wheeler County is not unique in the fact that our county fairgrounds are vital to the communities we serve. We are but one of many examples from around this great state of people who are doing our best to manage what we have, on a limited budget, to serve the greatest good.

One example of this in Wheeler County was the summer of 2024 and our service to our community during the fire season. Merely weeks before our county fair was to begin, the Lonerock Fire in both Wheeler and Gilliam Counties directly impacted the community of Spray. Specifically, a Level 3 evacuation was ordered. When asked for groups to step up and help, our Fair Board very generously opened up our facility for animal boarding of large animals and additionally offered up our RV park sites to evacuees who were able to flee with their RVs—all at no charge to the evacuees nor for compensation from any other entity.

It wasn't long after our fair that the Fossil Complex Fires struck, and we were called to serve our communities once again. This time it was in providing a place for ODF to have a fire camp, as well as a source for potable water and gray-water disposal (in conjunction with the City of Fossil).

While it doesn't take a lot out of our budget to assist our community in these ways, it does take a lot to have our facilities kept in condition to be able to serve at a moment's notice. To have facilities kept in condition to host not only a fair, but also disaster response/recovery operations as well, with aging facilities is a huge budgetary challenge.

The Wheeler County Fair Board maintains the fairgrounds AND operates our fair and rodeo on only the funds that come to us from the Oregon Lottery and what we can gather through sponsorship and fundraising efforts in one of the poorest counties in the state. That includes staff wages (.5 FTE in maintenance/groundskeeping and .25 FTE office/administrative), utilities, facility maintenance, and general fair operations.

On behalf of the Wheeler County Fair Board, I wish to express our support of the legislative "ask" from the Oregon Fairs Association:

- Eliminate the cap established 20 years ago and fully fund the 1% of lottery funds to county fairs with 90% of these funds going to county fairgrounds and 10% of funds going to the state fairgrounds.
- Support an additional \$20.839 million to the state fairgrounds for infrastructure improvements as a regional emergency and evacuee center.
- Fund a study and additional capital project improvements to state and county fairgrounds to ensure they can continue as resilience/disaster response, economic, social, cultural, and educational hubs in our communities.
- Support an investment of \$2.5 million to the Union County Fairgrounds for health and safety infrastructure, including running water and sewer

Sincerely,

Cindy Burlingame, Wheeler County Fair Board Secretary