

Emerson Levy
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
House District 53



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 6th, 2025

Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Emerson Levy, and I am the State Representative for House District 53, representing much of Bend, Redmond, Sisters, Tumalo, and Eagle Crest. I am here today to express my support for HB 3077, which seeks to streamline the ability for employees of local jurisdictions to opt in to supporting initial attack suppression in emergency situations for up to 30 days, allowing those with a good understanding of the local knowledge of roads, topography, and water sources, to step up and help fire crews.

The legislative intent of HB 3077 is not to allow every well-intentioned, untrained civilian to walk onto an active fireline without training, but it does set up protocol used with the national and state guard that allows previously trained city and county employees to work with their employers to support active fires.

This bill was submitted at the request of the city and county members of Oregon AFSCME, who saw first hand how our firefighters, Oregon Department of Forestry, the Oregon Fire Marshall, the United States Forest Service, Weyerhaeuser, the Bureau and Land Development and Conservation, Oregon Department of Corrections, Adults in Custody, landowners, contingency response from other states and fleets of contractors worked together to meet the need.

Oregon's 2024 Wildfire Season set unprecedented incident numbers, again. It also set unprecedented co-occurring project fires in geographically isolated areas, exacerbating the issue of finding enough skilled workers to support all aspects of initial attack suppression. Particularly in rural Oregon, seasonal fire fighting is common for those recently graduated, and seasoned public servants who have a strong understanding of initial attack suppression. We are deeply grateful for those who answer the call to service 24/7, around the clock.

What we learned in 2024 is that fire seasons are getting longer, the fires are burning hotter, and the relative humidity recovery was not what it has been in the past. Everything is drier now, which means that those living in valleys need to build stronger fire safety best practices into their lives.

Those who have been raised in legacy hot fire seasons who perhaps have the best practices to respond to a "Go now" situation, still need more help.

HB 3077 is a bill that is yet another example of Oregon taking care of Oregonians. We look forward to continuing to work with Chair Tran, Rep. Evans and other interested parties on how to implement this bill well.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emerson Levy
State Representative, House District 53