

Submitter: Mary Faith Bell
On Behalf Of: Tillamook Board of County Commissioners
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3556

Dear Committee Members,

Remember the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004? Remember Banda Aceh? The heartbreaking, horrifying videos of tsunami waves wiping out beach communities full of locals and tourists alike? That could happen here. Tillamook County is actively engaged in emergency preparedness and resilience efforts in the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone event and subsequent tsunami. It is a daunting task to consider and plan for the needs of our citizens in the weeks and months after a major disaster, but we are committed. However, planning for the needs of tens of thousands of summertime visitors in the event of a disaster is beyond the scope of what we can fund. It is just that simple. We want to be able to take care of people when they are here, and we can't afford to.

As a Tillamook County Commissioner, I support HB 3556 because I have firsthand knowledge of the need for local governments to have greater flexibility in use of transient lodging tax (TLT) revenues for public safety and infrastructure. By Oregon State law, unincorporated Tillamook County has discretion over 30 percent of the TLT generated in our county. This is out of balance relative to our needs given the inordinate impacts of tourism to our area. As a tourist destination we value the economic benefits of tourism, and we need to be able to invest more TLT revenue in infrastructure and public safety to care for visitors while they are here.

We could save lives by seismically reinforcing bridges that are predicted to fail in an earthquake, without which there will be no viable escape plan for tsunami evacuation. Think about that for a minute. The bridge will be gone, and the people who made it that far will have no way to cross to safety before the tsunami arrives. We could save lives with vertical evacuation structures in beach communities that are too far from a high point to make it out alive. There is life saving work to do on the Oregon coast before the disaster happens. Please give us the latitude to use more tourism revenues that are generated here to be ready.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Faith Bell
Tillamook County Commissioner