

Submitter: Katie Baltzor

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3349

My husband and I belong to the Lone Pine RFPA in Harney County and support HB 3349 and 3350. RFPAs in Eastern Oregon are vital to rural Oregon as they are the first on the scene in many cases. I have witnessed first hand the effectiveness of the RFPAs during the Cinder Butte Fire in 2017 and the Falls Fire in 2024. Their efforts truly helped with the containment of these fires, as well as many others that I haven't witnessed firsthand. The RFPAs are comprised of a group of local ranchers, farmers and other community members with a vested interest in our rangeland, whether on public or private land. In recent years, our county has experienced many megafires and the RFPAs play an integral part in suppression of these fires. Our local agencies are sometimes pulled in several directions when we experience multiple fires, as we did this year. Outside teams come into our community to help fight and manage the fires with no knowledge of the topography or road systems to reach the fire. The local knowledge possessed by members of the RFPAs is invaluable. Keep in mind, the RFPA members are all volunteers and I work strategically and cooperatively with agencies to contain fires. However, the RFPAs need additional and updated supplies and equipment to be effective in fire suppression. The RFPAs operate on a very small budget and rely on grants, donations and good deals on equipment and supplies. HB 3349 would provide some much needed assistance to our local RFPAs and I strongly urge you to pass HB 3349 and HB 3350. Thank you for your consideration.