



CURRY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF JOHN WARD

CURRY COUNTY, OREGON

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To: The Oregon House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government & Veterans

Dear Honorable Chair Tran & Honorable Vice-Chairs Lewis & Grayber -

I'm writing today to provide my strongest possible support for HB 3366.

This bill gives us the opportunity to truly get ahead of the devastating wildfire crisis in our state. Last year 1,956 fires burned just short of 2 million acres, costing Oregon over \$350 million dollars to fight. In the past few years, the loss of human life and property in our state (not to mention the loss of our precious salmon stocks and beautiful wildlife) to wildfire is virtually incalculable.

Last year wildfire fighters were imported from as far away as Australia and New Zealand because our biggest crisis isn't just these devastating fires, it's not having enough trained wildfire fighters to fight them.

HB 3366 will help construct the Rogue Siskiyou Regional Wildfire Training Center (RSR) in Curry County. This will be our state's first facility dedicated to training wild land wildfire fighters. At full capacity the RSR will have the capability to annually graduate up to 1,500 wildfire cadets a year. It will be the finest wildfire training school in our nation, constructed in some of our state's most rugged wild land in the heart of the Rogue Siskiyou's...exactly the type of unforgiving country where you want to train our nation's finest wild land firefighters.

RSR will additionally have the capability of serving as a Southern Oregon wildfire command center and as a base for rapid response helicopter hand crews. Several major fires could have been stopped the past few seasons with the capability to immediately get hand crews on top of wilderness fires. RSR will additionally have the ability to provide critical food service and shelter support for both wildfire fighters and wildfire victims. RSR will have a statewide recruitment program to attract young women and men across our state to this vital and rewarding career.

We are joined in this incredible effort by Representative Evans and his wonderful team, as RSR will become a southern satellite to their statewide *SPARTICIS* firefighting training project.

In the off-season RSR will also serve as a base for focused fuel reduction crews. This will retain our firefighters year-round and provide our state with its most important defense against devastating wildfire.

In addition, RSR's defense of Oregon lives, lands, and property can help turn the tide against losing more fire insurance carriers in our state. Passing HB 3366 and building RSR is one of the single most positive, proactive things we can do this legislative session in our must-win fight against

wildfire. It's also one of the single most important things we as Oregonians can do on behalf of our families, children, and grandchildren...and our spectacular state's future.

Please join me and so many others in support of this critical bill.

Thank you!

Sincerely -

John Ward - Sheriff