

April 1, 2025

House Committee on Judiciary

Cory Staniforth, Eagle Point, OR -- In Opposition to HB 3917

Chair Kropf and members of the Committee, my name is Cory Staniforth. I own an excavation & construction company in Eagle Point, where I live with my wife and three young children. I'm also a journeyman/lineman by trade and even worked for Pacific Power for about a year. It simply blows my mind that they'd admit guilt for not turning off the lines and then consistently try to get out from under their financial responsibility for the past five years and counting.

On the day of the fire, I was on an elk hunting trip in eastern Oregon, but had a satellite phone with me because my 2nd child was about to be born. My wife was worried sick about the fire getting closer to our property. There was no concrete information, so I hiked 5 miles to get reception to check with a US Marshall friend of mine. He told me to get home and get out. So, I immediately left camp, hiked back out and drove 7 hours through the night to get home by 4am. Coming down Hwy 62 into Shady Cove, right before Eagle Creek, my heart sank. I thought for sure my house was gone. When I reached my house, it wasn't burnt yet, but I still had power.

Because of my former linework, I also worked the Paradise and Northern California Camp Fire in 2018 and the Santa Barbara fire in 2017 – I had knowledge of what to do when I reached my burning property. I went into mitigation mode, digging a cutline, falling trees, getting the sprinklers on. We have livestock, so I loaded 13 piglets into my stock trailer, saved the chickens, but the two sows were stubborn and wouldn't come out. I heard an explosion and saw the neighbors property was up in flames, so I ran to help, digging more line, but I couldn't see more than 5 feet in any direction at that point. I was trying to help brand some of their bulls, when 20 foot flames came roaring at me like a freight train. Two big oaks trapped me in, so I had to run and hop a barbed wire fence, covered in blackberries and run through a ½ acre of burning grass. I honestly thought I was going to die. I've always been able to fend for myself, but the fact that there was no formal warning, no evacuation notice, nobody mitigating, it was a very helpless feeling to be honest.

I had power on at my property until the fire engulfed it. Totally unacceptable. My family lost everything down to the clothes on our backs. Nine days later, my 2nd child was born and we all were "living" at a friend's house in a 10x10 bedroom. Me, my wife, a newborn, a toddler and 5 dogs. I began rebuilding myself within a year and

have spent easily over \$100,000 out of pocket on erosion control alone. The massive loss of trees and brush destabilized my property. You don't need a degree in soil erosion to know that water + scorched earth is a recipe for landslides. I've been fighting them on my property for 5 solid years now after we lost trees and ground structure to support the hillside. We have to rebuild driveways every year to the tune of about \$20,000 each time. There's nothing holding the soil in place. A total snowball effect and insurance fights it and fights it over and over again.

In my line of business, I provide services for a fee to my customers. If I do something wrong, I fix it, find a resolution and move on, period. Why should it be any different for a public utility that didn't do the right thing? They fight it and drag it out and refuse to pay while so many lives twist and wait and fight to survive. It all boils down to accountability.

I urge you to vote **NO on HB 3917**