

Submitter: Denice Searcy

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3940

NO on HB 3940

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB 3940.

On the surface, it's a tax on beverage containers (5-cents) on sales of beer, wine, soda, juice, cider and just plain water, for the purposes of wildfire prevention and response. They want this new 5-cent drink tax to be used for a new fund to fight wildfires but why didn't they fund wildfire funding with the 20% budget increase from last time? Everything got funded EXCEPT wildfire prevention and 18,000 sex offender file backlogs.

This tax also rewards the liberal health lobby who have been trying to tax soda pop and reduce beer/wine drinking in Oregon. Remember the anti-wine ads they ran? Oregon Health Authority scrapped the summer anti-alcohol television ad campaign which got terrible reviews from the public. How much did that cost? Remember the scandal of the Health Dept. hiding a beer/wine tax study because they didn't like the results? In a January 30, 2024 article in the Oregonian it was revealed that Oregon never publicized a study that it funded that found that higher beer, wine taxes would barely stem heavy drinking and would not affect drinking in minors. Is this the same Oregon Health Authority that has funded 29 sex change operations on minors (HB 2002-2024)?

BUT there are OTHER TAXES in the bill as well such as:

- Increasing the forest harvest tax upon taxpayers (62.5) 100 cents per thousand feet, board measure, adjusts with the Consumer Price Index annually (taxation without representation).
- Minimum assessments of forestland fire protection or suppression is raised from \$18.75 to \$58 adjusted upward only by the Consumer Price Index annually (taxation without representation).
- Annual cost of protection by State Forester set at 30-cents per acre grazing land adjusts upward only with the Consumer Price Index. (taxation without representation)

Combining so many taxes in one bill is a disservice to what is acceptable and what is not. Where are the bills to stop the mismanagement of the forests that would reduce the wildfires in the first place? This is burning up money and is not a fix to the underlying problem. Making taxes adjust with the Consumer Price Index or any other index is an increase in taxes without representation, particularly when it doesn't allow

for a downward adjustment as in this bill.

This tax also rewards the liberal health lobby who has been trying to tax soda pop and reduce beer/wine drinking in Oregon. The politicians aim to tax people out-of-drinking. Oddly, Americans are drinking less beer and wine in generations. It already is happening without a new beer tax.

Other points to consider, Oregon HB 3940 is:

- A Hidden Sales Tax on Consumers – Oregonians already pay a 10-cent deposit per bottle under our successful, privately run Bottle Bill. Raising it by another 5 cents is just a sales tax on beverages that unfairly impacts working families and local breweries.
- Threatens a Successful Recycling System – The Bottle Bill works because it runs without government interference. Adding a tax will burden brewers, distributors, retailers, and consumers, weakening a system that has thrived for decades.
- No Connection to Wildfire Funding – A strong recycling program has nothing to do with wildfire prevention. This tax feels out of place compared to other funding sources.
- Better Funding Options Exist – Instead of new taxes, Oregon should consider:
 - o Redirecting existing insurance tax revenue.
 - o Using lottery funds, as suggested by Sen. Fred Girod.
 - o Improving forest management instead of just spending more taxpayer money.
- A Poor Funding Choice – Property tax, income tax, and other sources make sense for wildfire prevention. But this Bottle Bill tax is completely unrelated.
- This is government overreach—raising taxes on everyday items without addressing wildfire risks. TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION!!

Please find a more responsible way to fund wildfire prevention.