

Submitter: Cody James

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB587

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 587, sponsored by Senator Meek, Representative Diehl, and their esteemed colleagues. This bill offers critical financial relief to Oregonians impacted by wildfires by exempting lawsuit awards and legal fees from state corporate excise and income taxes. As someone who [cares about Oregon's communities / has witnessed the devastating effects of wildfires / insert personal connection if applicable], I believe this legislation is a vital step toward helping individuals and businesses recover from these disasters.

Wildfires have become an all-too-common tragedy in Oregon, leaving families displaced, businesses destroyed, and livelihoods upended. For those who turn to the courts to seek justice—whether against negligent parties or for compensation—the financial burden doesn't end with a settlement or judgment. Taxation on these awards, or the legal fees required to secure them, can significantly reduce the resources available for rebuilding. Senate Bill 587 addresses this by ensuring that wildfire victims keep more of what they're awarded and aren't penalized for the costs of pursuing their rights.

The bill's scope is well-designed: it applies to wildfires tied to gubernatorial emergencies, the Emergency Conflagration Act, or federal disaster declarations between 2018 and 2026. This retroactive and forward-looking approach acknowledges both past suffering—like the devastating 2020 fires—and the ongoing risk we face. Allowing taxpayers to amend returns back to 2018 further ensures fairness for those who've already borne these burdens.

Beyond its practical benefits, this legislation sends a powerful message: Oregon stands with its people in times of crisis. By removing the tax burden on wildfire-related awards and legal fees, the state can help survivors focus on recovery rather than financial strain. I urge you to support Senate Bill 587 and provide this much-needed relief to our communities.