

Dear House Committee on Revenue,

I write in support of HB 3489, which reinstates a timber severance tax in Oregon. Since the prior tax was phased out about 30 years ago (unwisely in my view), the State's revenue from timber harvests has substantially declined although the costs of protecting timberland from fire have increased enormously. This measure replaces a number of disparate tax programs with this single tax, at a rate that shelters small woodland owners from increases, while shifting the burden to larger woodland owners and logging operations, as I think is appropriate.

Several features of the bill are meritorious. The tax will mostly fall on the largest operations, thus ensuring that these big companies pay a fair share of the costs of forest protection and restoration. It ensures future funding for wildfire suppression, and funds programs designed to reduce or prevent forest fires through funding for the state fire marshal, thus improving the safety for all Oregonians, but especially those living in or close to fire zones. And importantly it provides a source of revenue for the counties where the logging occurs.

Perhaps most important to me, who is deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on our future, the bill also incentivizes growing larger trees before logging them to increase the sequestration and storage of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, a small but worthwhile step forward in our fight against climate change.

Finally, the bill provides for referral of the measure, if adopted, to a vote of the people. If there are serious flaws that are identified, we can reject it. But we should have a voice in the decision. Please give us one by voting for this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gary Reiness