

Submitter: BILL HART
On Behalf Of: The People of Harney County
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5531

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, CO-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith.

Hello, My name is Bill Hart, and I serve as the Harney County Judge.

I want to thank everyone for their strong advocacy during the recent flooding emergency in Burns and Harney County. Due to above normal snow pack and the wildfires disaster from last year, snow thaw came off at a much faster rate than normal, causing a series of cascading events. The Silvies River overflowed its banks, and then inundate our aging sewer system—causing major damage to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. This flooding event revealed serious vulnerabilities in our systems that must be addressed.

I'm here today to ask for your support for capital construction funding to:

1. Rebuild and modernize the Burns sewer system, which is more than 60 years old and is no longer adequate,
2. And to also Implement river mitigation projects on the Silvies to reduce future flood risks.

I'd also like to express strong support for HB 3870, Section 13, which would fund a much-needed new jail facility in Harney County.

- Our current jail facility was built in 1962 and is definitely outdated, unsafe, and limits our ability to meet both public safety and behavioral health needs. Lack of these services will ultimately lead to recidivism.
- With evolving legislation, statutory jail inspections, and national accreditation standards, Harney County faces daily operational challenges.
- Current conditions of confinement pose a high liability for the county government and the local community taxpayers.
- We are Currently in the design stages of construction and continues to seek funding opportunities.
- County administration has been working since 2020 to find funding and has designated just over \$5M for this project. We are asking for \$3M to finish this project.

I respectfully urge your support for these critical investments to protect our community and improve public safety. Thank you for your time and your service.