



February 5, 2026

Ways & Means Capital Construction Subcommittee:

As legislators with portions of our district including Jackson County, we wanted to share our support for the Capital Project Request submitted by Senator Linthicum for **\$180,000 to strengthen operational resilience at three heavily used county parks**: Emigrant Lake, Howard Prairie Resort, and Joseph Stewart. These parks are vital recreational, economic, and quality-of-life assets for rural Southern Oregon, supporting local tourism, seasonal employment, and small businesses that rely on dependable visitor access during peak summer months.

In recent years, planned **wildfire-related power shutoffs** have increasingly disrupted park operations. These facilities depend on significant refrigeration and electrical systems to support concessions, events, and visitor services. Power interruptions have resulted in the loss of refrigerated goods and service disruptions to the public; impacts that are expected to increase as wildfire risk, extreme heat, and preventative electrical curtailments become more common across rural Oregon.

This project would install propane-powered backup generators at each park, along with the electrical infrastructure necessary to automatically provide power during outages. The generators would allow parks to remain operational during planned shutoffs, protect perishable inventory, and ensure continuity of services for residents, travelers, and campers who often have limited alternative recreational options in rural areas.

The Jackson County Parks Program is self-funded and has already demonstrated fiscal responsibility and foresight in addressing these challenges. In 2024, Jackson County invested approximately \$200,000 in generator installations at Howard Prairie and Joseph Stewart parks to maintain park access. The requested funding builds on that investment by expanding backup power to additional critical systems, maximizing the value of prior capital expenditures.

Reliable park operations are especially important to the rural tourism economy. These parks attract visitors from across the region who support nearby communities through overnight stays, fuel purchases, dining, and retail spending. Preventing closures and service interruptions during the high-use summer season helps protect this economic activity while reinforcing Oregon's commitment to outdoor recreation as a cornerstone of rural economic development.

This request aligns with the Legislature's broader wildfire resilience and infrastructure hardening goals. Proactively investing in backup power reduces emergency disruptions, limits waste and ensures that public facilities remain safe and functional during wildfire-related events. It represents a practical, cost-effective approach to adapting public infrastructure to changing environmental conditions.

This appropriation is a strategic investment in rural infrastructure that supports tourism, strengthens wildfire preparedness, and ensures continued access to outdoor recreation for Oregonians and visitors alike.

Thank you for your consideration:

Rep. Kim Wallan

Rep. Emily McIntire

Rep. Alek Skarlatos

Sen. Jeff Golden