

Submitter: Reta Cochrane  
On Behalf Of: Row River Fire Response  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction  
Measure, Appointment or SB5701  
Topic:

I am Reta Cochrane, and I support the Disston Fire Station capital request.

I taught for 30 years at our rural Dorena School. And one day, I experienced firsthand why local fire protection matters so much.

A young boy ran past me and said he was going to use a different bathroom because the one in the gym was on fire. I thought surely that couldn't be true—but it was. The bathroom was on fire.

I immediately notified the office, called for the school to be evacuated, and grabbed a fire extinguisher. I made repeated trips in and out of the smoke-filled bathroom, stopping to catch my breath each time, until finally the last flame was out.

It took the nearest fire engine over half an hour to reach our school up the valley. If that student hadn't warned me—and if I hadn't taken the risk of fighting that fire myself—our school could have been lost, and many people could have been hurt.

That moment has stayed with me.

After more than 40 years without local fire protection, our community came together to establish a volunteer fire department. We worked hard and successfully secured a tax levy to fund training and operational costs. Knowing that trained responders will arrive in an emergency has meant more to our residents than I can fully express.

But to truly serve our valley, we need a permanent fire station.

Right now, we are operating out of a farmers barn and he needs his barn back. That leaves this critical emergency service in a vulnerable and unstable position. We need a proper facility to house and maintain our fire engines, tenders, and apparatus so they are protected, ready, and reliable.

A station located at the far end of the valley near the Umpqua National Forest in Disston would strategically position equipment for rapid response to wildfires, structure fires, and medical emergencies. In a rural community like ours, minutes matter.

As a Red Cross volunteer, I also understand the importance of public facilities that can serve as emergency shelters during disasters. A permanent fire station in

Disston would not only strengthen fire protection—it would also provide a safe gathering place in times of crisis, increasing the overall resilience of our valley.

Please support the Disston Fire Station capital request.  
Thank you.