

Submitter: Devon Lawson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR201  
Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Devon Lawson. I am testifying in support of SJR 201.

This resolution asks a fundamental question. When our state has a surplus of wealth, should we prioritize private luxury or collective survival?

Currently, when Oregon has a surplus, we send checks to taxpayers, disproportionately benefiting the wealthy in urban centers. Meanwhile, our forests burn. SJR 201 proposes a modest change. After the first \$300 million is returned, we split the rest. Half still goes to taxpayers, but the other half goes to wildfire prevention. In Central Oregon, a tax refund is useless if your home has burned down. This bill redirects surplus value from private consumption to the essential defense of our land and communities.

The current Kicker mechanism starves our schools during boom years, preventing us from building reserves for the bust years. This bill explicitly directs funds to K-12 and Community Colleges. Community colleges are the engine of the working class. They cannot plan for the future when the state's surplus is automatically drained every biennium. This bill offers a stable revenue stream to train Oregon's workforce.

You are not passing a tax today. You are simply asking the people of Oregon whether they would prefer to keep 100% of their kicker or invest 50% of the excess to ensure their children have schools and their homes don't burn. Voting "No" today tells the voters that they aren't smart enough to make that trade-off.

The Kicker, in its current form, is a relic that prioritizes short-term payouts over long-term survival. SJR 201 is a necessary modernization. I urge you to refer this to the ballot.

Thank you.

While I am a member of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, my testimony today represents only my personal view and not the position of the HECC.