

Daniel Scotton
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Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
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Testimony supporting SJR 201

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Daniel Scotton, Executive Director of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN), a grassroots organization composed of Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and encourage state action to address it. I offer this testimony in support of SJR 201.

Redirecting a portion of extraordinary surplus revenues to wildfire prevention and suppression is not new spending - it is responsible budgeting. Wildfire costs are already destabilizing Oregon's finances. In recent years, we have witnessed fire seasons that surpass the billion-dollar mark in damages, recovery, suppression, and long-term community impacts.

As the Center for Climate Integrity notes, "Since 1980, the U.S. has experienced an increasing number of wildfires that cost over \$1 billion per event. These large wildfires cost the U.S. \$13.2 billion per year from 2018-2022, significantly more money than in the 1980s where, when adjusted for inflation, there were no billion dollar wildfires in the U.S.". Additionally, the Forum on Oregon Climate Economics describes the extent to which Oregon taxpayers are already footing the bill, "... the total costs of Oregon's 2018 wildfire season in today's dollars was more than \$6.8 billion, or \$3,900 per household."

These are not abstract numbers, they are real costs. **And those funds must come from somewhere.**

Continuing to rely on emergency appropriations during fire season, while fully aware that increasingly severe fire seasons are now the norm rather than the exception, is not a strategy. It is reactive governance. Purposefully investing surplus revenues strengthens our state's ability to prepare for environmental emergencies instead of scrambling to respond to them. It builds resilience in advance and reduces long-term costs to communities, taxpayers, and local economies.

SJR 201 offers a balanced and pragmatic approach. It preserves half of the personal kicker, ensuring taxpayers still receive refunds, while dedicating extraordinary surpluses above \$300

million to essential public investments. This structure respects taxpayers while recognizing that Oregon faces mounting fiscal pressures that require thoughtful, forward-looking planning.

Directing surplus funds toward education delivers both immediate and long-term benefits. Investments in K-12 schools and community colleges strengthen local economics, expand workforce capacity, increase the economic vitality of rural communities, and prepare Oregon for the realities of a changing climate. Community colleges, in particular, are lifelines in rural Oregon. They provide job training that allows for community members to reskill and develop new pathways into emerging industries.

Businesses looking to expand or relocate evaluate workforce readiness carefully. A strong community college system signals that Oregon is prepared for economic opportunity. As the American Association of Community Colleges has noted, community colleges continue to operate under funding constraints while being asked to rapidly adapt to evolving labor markets. Sustained investment is essential.

Stable funding for wildfire resilience and education is not just sound fiscal policy, it strengthens Oregon's ability to respond to emergencies, and increases our economic viability as a state. It signals that our state plans ahead, invests wisely, and prioritizes both environmental protection and economic vitality.

SJR 201 reflects prudent governance: protect taxpayers, prepare for predictable risks, and invest in the institutions that sustain our communities. It is a responsible step toward long-term stability in an era defined by climate uncertainty.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to support SJR 201. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Sources:

Center for Climate Integrity, *The Cost of Climate Change in Oregon*,
<https://climateintegrity.org/uploads/media/CCI-Oregon-ImpactsAndCosts-2025.pdf>

Forum on Oregon Climate Economics, *The Economic Cost of Climate Change to Oregonians*,
<https://irp.cdn-website.com/0358d1eb/files/uploaded/economic-cost-of-climate-change-oregonians.pdf>