



Senator Bill Hansell

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Hansell introduces wildfire legislation package

SALEM, Ore.—In the aftermath of devastating wildfires throughout Oregon last year, State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, is introducing a package of bills that he hopes will become law. The bills allow greater flexibility in freeing up resources to fight fires and moves areas that are currently unprotected under the jurisdiction of the state Fire Marshall.

“This legislation is a major step forward in protecting both public and private property and ensuring the safety of Oregonians. Senate District 29, the district I represent, has seen severe wildfires in recent years and this legislation will help provide the clarity and resources that are needed in fighting these fires,” Hansell said.

Hansell crafted these bills after he sponsored a town hall meeting in Sherman County following the Substation Fire. This wildfire, which was the largest in the United States at the time it was burning, consumed 80,000 acres of range and cropland, in Sherman and Wasco Counties. Several state legislators were in attendance, and heard testimony at the town hall meeting, from farmers, first responders and fire officials. These bills are a result of the testimony given at the meeting.

One of the bills, Senate Bill 311, would add 400,000 acres of currently unprotected land to the State Fire Marshall’s jurisdiction. In addition, Senate Bill 290 would grant civil immunity to a person who voluntarily fights a wildfire in good faith.

Senate Bills 291 and 292 would allocate more resources for air support and allow the Governor and the State Fire Marshall more flexibility in allocating statewide resources to fight wildfires.

The 2019 Legislative Session is scheduled to begin in Salem on January 22nd.

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