House Wildfire Recovery Committee meets Monday, focus on meeting the needs of impacted communities

New committee plans to receive public testimony in February from residents of impacted communities

SALEM -- The new House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery will hold its first meeting today at 5:30 pm, beginning its work on solutions to support Oregonians affected by the Labor Day wildfires. Livestreaming of the meeting will be available here.

Additionally, the committee will hold two virtual public hearings in mid-February to hear directly from wildfire survivors in communities throughout Oregon about their post-fire experiences and needs related to shelter, clean-up, and rebuilding. These stories will help the committee identify where to focus its efforts this legislative session.

Testimony will be organized by each region of the state affected by the 2020 Labor Day wildfires.

- Monday, February 15th (5:30 – 8:30 pm): Canyon/Valley, Metro, Coast Regions
- Wednesday, February 17th (5:30 – 8:30 pm): Southern Region

“My heart continues to break at the immeasurable suffering that so many Oregonians have faced since last September,” said Rep. Brian Clem (D-Salem), who is chairing the committee. “Our work will be centered on people. We will listen to the most pressing needs facing individuals and families as they attempt to recover from this horrific tragedy. We are committed to ensuring that no one gets left behind and that resources are getting to everyone who needs our help.”
In the aftermath of the most destructive fire season in state history, impacted communities will continue to navigate challenges around the rebuilding of homes and businesses, access to food and clean drinking water, landslide risks, and the need for additional wraparound services.

“There have been so many heartbreaking stories in the aftermath of the catastrophic fires that destroyed so many homes, resulted in loss of life and devastated the landscape for decades to come,” Rep. Rick Lewis (R-Silverton) said. “It is an honor to serve as a vice chair on the Wildfire Recovery Committee as we work in a bipartisan fashion to address recovery going forward and address the needs of those adversely impacted.”

The Labor Day wildfires burned more than one million acres across the state. More than 4,000 homes were destroyed or sustained major damage during the fires, and it is expected to take at least one year to begin rebuilding in some communities due to hazardous waste, damaged or destroyed utilities, and debris removal.

“We were already facing a housing crisis, a shelter crisis, and a pandemic before this tragedy displaced so many individuals and families,” Rep. Pam Marsh (D-Southern Jackson County) said. “The destruction is staggering, and we’ll have to keep working to help survivors in need of a place to call home. We also must approach this work with an equity lens, given the disproportionate impact these fires had on people with disabilities, seniors, veterans and Latinx communities.”

The following members of the Oregon House of Representatives serve on the committee:

Brian Clem (D-Salem), Chair
Rick Lewis (R-Silverton), Vice Chair
Pam Marsh (D-Southern Jackson County), Vice Chair
Jami Cate (R-Lebanon)
Paul Evans (D-Monmouth)
David Gomberg (D-Central Coast)
Dacia Grayber (D-Tigard)
Mark Meek (D-Clackamas County)
Lily Morgan (R-Grants Pass)
Bill Post (R-Keizer)

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