



OREGON SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 12, 2024

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After Special Session, Senate Republican Leader Bonham Urges ODF Reform, Stronger Forest Management to Prevent Wildfires

SALEM, Ore. – Following the conclusion of the special legislative session to address the **Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)** and **Oregon State Fire Marshal's (OSFM)** outstanding bills from the 2024 wildfire season, **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles)** issued the following statement:

“While it was necessary to address the state’s unpaid bills, this special session only treated the symptoms of a much larger problem. The real issue is decades of agency mismanagement and ineffective policies that fail to address the root causes of these devastating fires. **ODF’s** leadership must improve its performance and take responsibility for allowing these issues to persist. **Governor Kotek** must also step up and use her leadership to drive the necessary reforms at the agency so we’re not constantly reacting after disaster strikes.”

The Legislature approved funding to pay off millions of dollars in unpaid bills, ensuring that wildfire response contractors and other partners are compensated for their critical work. However, **Bonham** emphasized that without real reforms, the state will continue to face these challenges year after year.

“Oregonians deserve a system that proactively manages our forest to prevent future fires. Current policies lock up our forests, making them more vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires. **ODF’s** inability to prioritize prevention strategies reflects a pattern of inefficiency that undermines its mission and public trust. We need to use prescribed fires, thin overgrown forests, remove excess fuels, and support sustainable timber harvests. These are common-sense solutions that will make our forests healthier and reduce wildfire risk—while generating jobs and spurring economic activity in rural Oregon.”

Senate Republicans have consistently called for comprehensive reforms to Oregon’s forest management and wildfire policies. **Bonham** concluded by urging his colleagues to focus on long-term solutions when the Legislature reconvenes in 2025.

“We can’t keep reacting to wildfires after the fact. Let’s work together to prevent them from happening in the first place. Oregonians deserve nothing less.”

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