



**REPRESENTATIVE JACK ZIKA
HOUSE DISTRICT 53**

For Immediate Release

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Wildfire Protection Bill Held Senate Public Hearing

SALEM, Ore. – HB 2222, a bill that would require the Oregon Department of Forestry to report to the legislature regarding its implementation of the Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Act, which was signed into law in 1997, was given a public hearing before the Oregon Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources. State Representative Jack Zika testified before the committee and releases this statement:

"There is no greater natural disaster risk to Central Oregonians than wildfire. In just the last few years we've seen home evacuations in Bend from the Two Bulls fire (2014), Pine Mountain Fire (2016) and Tepee Fire (2018), in Redmond near Eagle Crest (2016), in Sisters from Milli Fire (2017), to name a few. My predecessor, former State Representative Gene Whisnant, started work on this idea to help with wildfire protection by providing property owners incentives in order to better prepare residents and prevent damage from catastrophic wildfire."

Zika is a chief sponsor of HB 2222 with the bi-partisan support of chief co-sponsors Senator Betsy Johnson, Representative Cheri Helt and Representative Daniel Bonham. Zika says, "Our wildfire protection bill will help with reporting and implementation of this important law."

The bill continues through the legislative process after it unanimously passed the House Committee on Natural Resources and the House of Representatives. The Act was intended to provide property owners incentives and tools to remove ladder fuels in order to better protect Oregon residents from catastrophic wildfire.

Since the Act was signed into law, the risk of wildfire to Oregon residents has only grown, as additionally shown by the destruction of Paradise, California last summer. Yet, the Oregon Department of Forestry has failed to fully implement the Act, leaving Oregonians at a higher risk of property destruction or worse. HB 2222 would help push the Department toward implementing this important law.

HB 2222 passed the Oregon House and now works through Oregon State Senate legislative process.

Jack Zika represents House District 53 which includes the communities of Redmond, Tumalo, Sunriver and portions of Bend and unincorporated Deschutes County.

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