



KATE BROWN
Governor

September 14, 2020

Speaker Tina Kotek
Senate President Peter Courtney
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

Dear Madam Speaker and Mr. President,

Our state faces several unprecedented challenges simultaneously: the COVID-19 pandemic; structural racism resulting in persistent disparities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and Tribal communities in our state; widespread unemployment; a significant budget shortfall; and now the worst wildfire season in our lifetimes.

We have worked closely together on all of these challenges. I applaud the recent work of you, your staff, and all legislators during the 2020 Second Special Session. I know it has been incredibly difficult to navigate the demands of the Legislature's deliberative nature and the limits that COVID-19 require us to impose for public health and safety. I also want to commend your work on balancing our state budget in response to the economic crisis that COVID-19 has created.

The wildfires are a significant change since you adjourned the Second Special Session. As we continue to navigate these rapidly changing crises, I know you and many of your colleagues in the Legislature will stand ready, again, to attempt to help Oregonians and address these challenges. When it became apparent that COVID-19 disproportionately affected Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and Tribal communities in Oregon, we worked together to steer Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars to those communities. Now, we must work together to help Oregonians who have lost everything from these fires.

We have already begun working with you on an immediate relief package for consideration at the September meeting of the Emergency Board, and I have directed my agencies to bring you another proposal for consideration at a future Emergency Board meeting after we better understand the full impacts to our communities. I am also asking the Oregon Department of Forestry to estimate as quickly as possible the cost of fighting these catastrophic fires, and I am working with our congressional delegation to get substantial reimbursement from FEMA for as many of these costs as possible.

Until we understand the total impacts and costs, we must both help Oregonians and be judicious with our funds. As an example, I applaud the work Treasurer Read and his team have done to develop a new financial tool that we can use to pay for these fires. This will be presented in full at the September Emergency Board meeting.

Speaker Tina Kotek
Senate President Peter Courtney
September 14, 2020
Page 2

Given the advent of the wildfires, which occurred since the adjournment of the Second Special Session, I am writing to you today to outline vetoes that I intend to make to ensure that state agencies fighting wildfires have necessary resources in place to respond to the ongoing statewide wildfires state of emergency. In addition to those vetoes, I am also serving notice of my intention to veto a small number of single items in these appropriation bills that will ensure that the state budget remains in balance.

As part of an overall judicious approach, I ask you to reserve at least \$150 million in the emergency fund for upcoming requests relating to the fires. I stand ready to work with you on our response to the wildfire crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 emergency.

Article V, section 15b(4) of the Oregon Constitution requires me to announce publicly the intention to veto bills passed by the Legislature, which are still pending after adjournment, at least five days before issuing a veto. A news release issued in conjunction with this letter serves as that notice.

The items from appropriation bills that I intend to veto are outlined below, with specific sections listed for reference. Taken together, these vetoes increase the state's ending balance by over \$65 million to a total of \$164.3 million in General Fund and \$16.7 million in Lottery Fund.

SB 5723

- Reductions to Oregon Department of Forestry (fire protection, private forests, administration and equipment), Oregon Military Department (emergency management and operations), Oregon State Police (Offices of State Fire Marshal and Chief Medical Examiner, forensic services, and agency support), and DEQ (climate change reductions): Sections 177-179, 181-185, 273, 290-294, 297-299 & 322
- Special Purpose Appropriation for DHS/OHA: Section 342
- Early Learning Division reductions: Section 213

HB 4304

- Repeal of the Wildfire Damage Housing Relief Account within the Oregon Housing Fund: Sections 38-40a
- Repeal of the PERS unfunded liability reduction program and fund dedications: Sections 14-16, 18, 18a, 18b & 18c
- Sweep of funds from the Educator Advancement Fund: Section 61
- Sweep of funds from the State Treasurer: Section 57

Sincerely,



Governor Kate Brown