



KATE BROWN
Governor

March 22, 2018

Curry County Commissioners
94235 Moore Street, Suite 122
Gold Beach, OR 97444

Dear Chair Gold, Vice-Chair Huxley, and Commissioner Boice,

Ensuring the safety of Oregonians and our communities must be considered a top priority. However, I am concerned to hear from multiple sources about the continued reduction in public safety services within your community.

Last summer, I traveled to Curry County on two occasions to support efforts to contain and recover from the Chetco Bar Fire, which threatened area property and the local economy. Albeit under unfortunate circumstances, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of local leaders and community members and heard first-hand about the adverse impacts the fire had on both tourism and safety in the region.

As wildfires continue to increase in intensity and severity, demands on law enforcement and first responders will also increase. The threats posed by wildfires present immediate challenges to local public safety, but there are also growing concerns regarding the long-term divestment in Curry County law enforcement.

But even more importantly, your tax-paying residents of Curry County deserve and expect to be safe in their community. It is impossibly challenging to provide this assurance when only eight Curry County deputies are funded, which drastically constrains local patrol hours to a limited number of hours each day. Furthermore, I am concerned the ongoing budget cuts and years of scrutiny the Curry County's public safety budget has received in recent years will have long-term effects on the Sheriff's ability to recruit and retain new officers.

To help address these issues, the Oregon State Legislature specifically designated Curry County as one of just seven counties allowed to access their road fund moneys to pay for county law enforcement when it passed Oregon Revised Statute 368.706. With a reserve balance of approximately \$30 million, Curry County's road fund could help ameliorate your immediate issues until longer-term solutions are found.



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While I suspect this is well known, it is worth repeating that the Oregon State Police cannot be a substitute for local law enforcement. It is my understanding that all three incorporated cities in Curry County support a robust Sheriff's Office, which includes the jail. Not only do each of these communities heavily rely on the ability for mutual aid, but they more importantly rely jail services to help keep Curry County safe from criminal activity.

As your Governor, I appreciate the challenges that come with deciding how to balance a budget. Setting priorities that reflect that values of your community is a key part of the work you do. Ensuring that your citizens and visitors are safe is without a doubt a key priority, and I hope that you do everything you can, including accessing your road fund, to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Brown" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Governor Kate Brown

KB:klrw

cc: John R. HuttI, Curry County Counsel
John Hitt, Curry County Administrator
John Ward, Curry County Sheriff