

**GARY LEIF**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

District 2  
Douglas, Jackson, & Josephine Counties



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

December 12, 2018

Senator Ron Wyden  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

Southwest Oregon is experiencing an unprecedented crisis of catastrophic wildfire. It is now an annual occurrence for wildfire smoke to fill our valleys, threatening the health of our citizens and leading to the cancellation of events that bring visitors to our region. Southwest Oregon's reputation as a great place to reside, work and play is in jeopardy as more people are deciding to live elsewhere.

As our U.S. Senator you have visited our region many times and are aware of the impacts. However, respectfully, your insistence on passing the Oregon Wildlands Act and other related wilderness legislation sends the wrong message to our constituents as they look to elected officials for solutions that help break this yearly cycle of catastrophic wildfire and smoke.

The federal government administers the majority of land in my legislative district and throughout Southwest Oregon. Our constituents spend considerable time working and recreating on public lands, and they understand the dangerous conditions on our fire-prone national forests, O&C lands and designated wilderness areas. They are asking for better management of these forests to reduce heavy fuels and to thin overstocked stands.

During this time is critical that we give federal land managers the tools, resources and flexibility to do more work on the ground, more quickly. Arbitrary land designations and additional regulations on forest management activities only make this task more difficult. It is not a coincidence that the 175,000-acre Klondike Fire this year ignited and spread through a designated wilderness area.

I share your desire to protect Oregon's natural treasures, yet creating and expanding wilderness areas, and creating new recreation areas, are not going to bring more visitors to our region especially during our now-annual wildfire and smoke season. Recreation businesses that depend on the Rogue River have been severely impacted by the fires. The best way to protect our natural treasures, our tourism economy and our citizens' health and well-being is to ensure federal lands are appropriately managed and the risks are mitigated.

I appreciate your service to Oregon and stand ready to assist you in efforts to improve the management of federal lands. As past Douglas County Commissioner and now State Representative, my district is home to the "timber capital of the world," and our forest sector is willing to partner with the federal government to make needed forest treatments both economical and effective. To spare our citizens more summers of wildfire and smoke, we must take action as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Gary Leif  
State Representative HD2  
CC: U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley  
Congressman Greg Walden  
Congressman Peter DeFazio