

DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TIM FREEMAN

CHRIS BOICE

TOM KRESS

Douglas County Courthouse, Room 217
1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon 97470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2021

Commissioners Send the Governor Another Letter

The Letter Asks Governor to Get People Back to Work and Save our Businesses

(Douglas County, Ore.) The Douglas County Board of Commissioners have dedicated a tremendous amount of time and resources to finding ways to help our local businesses and communities during this pandemic. As a part of their continuing efforts, they sent another letter to Oregon's Governor today, asking her to put our businesses first, and to get Oregonians back to work, sooner rather than later. The latest letter expresses their sincere concern for the current and future economic plight of local businesses with regards to the lack of available, willing and motivated individuals to enter or reenter the workforce. The continued extensions of enhanced employment benefits during the pandemic has created a stalemate of applicants for businesses who are in desperate need of workers in order to continue to keep their doors open. The economic future of our local businesses is contingent on the immediate action by the Governor to repair the workforce slump caused by the pandemic and to help in revitalizing Oregon's economy again.

Commissioner Chris Boice, in particular has been working with local business communities and community partners to secure and distribute funding opportunities, provide access to resources and training, and in developing solutions to workforce issues throughout the pandemic. Commissioner Boice authored this letter, and asked the other Commissioners to join him in signing it and sending it to the Governor. A copy of the two-page letter from the Douglas County Board of Commissioners that was sent on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 to the Governor is attached below.

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Letter Attached – 2 pages

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Honorable Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
c/o Jennifer Andrew
900 Court St NE S-254
Salem OR 97301
jennifer.j.andrew@oregon.gov

Governor Brown,

While we understand the need for Unemployment Benefits and Social Programs during times of Pandemic, Economic Recessions, or Depressions, or for people who have temporary setbacks even in times of economic growth, the next big hurdle for Oregon to overcome is the lack of available workforce.

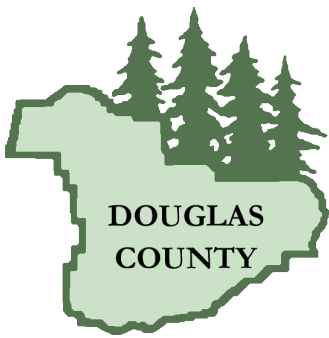
On June 1st, a collaboration of ten local business owners, local media outlets, the Southern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB) and the Douglas County Commissioners worked together to put on what became known as the “Open Air Job Fair”. Twenty-eight businesses were present seeking employees to hire immediately for approximately 438 open positions. Those positions ranged from zero experience required to, skilled labor positions such as welder/fabricators, truck drivers, care providers and RNs.

All those who attended deemed the overall event as a huge success. However, we must define success. In total, approximately 150 job seekers attended the event. This is the second job fair that was organized, the first had eight employers and fewer job openings, but only five job seekers showed up. Compared to that, this more recent event was a success. However, having only one-third the number of job seekers as job openings leaves local employers feeling helpless.

We currently are facing shortages in the supply line for goods and services on a global scale due to workforce availability. Locally we are no different. Many businesses have closed completely or shortened their hours because of a shortage of available or more importantly, WILLING workers. SOWIB recently did a study that showed that an employer would have to start a worker at \$19.00 per hour (that is an average expense of \$25 per hour to the employer), for a 40-hour work week just to match what they are currently receiving to stay at home.

The State of Oregon *generates* revenue from payroll taxes and income taxes when citizens participate in the workforce. The State *spends* money on unemployment benefits and social programs when they do not. This is a no-brainer. There should be no incentives to keep people from working while there are jobs to be had. Aside from that, the societal benefits that come from people seeing value in themselves, being a part of something, and contributing lessens the burden on law enforcement agencies and service providers of all kinds.

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With the enormous challenge ahead of processing these people through the employment department system back into the workforce, please consider stopping the enhanced unemployment benefits now. This will help encourage people to re-enter the workforce voluntarily rather than having them all requiring or seeking help from the limited employment agency staff. We can reduce this coming challenge by simply getting people back into the workforce starting now.

Thank you for your consideration,

DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tom Kress, Chair

Chris Boice, Commissioner

Tim Freeman, Commissioner