



The Honorable Gregory Smith
Oregon House of Representatives
District 57

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REPRESENTATIVE GREG SMITH CALLS FOR EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION AS WILDFIRES BURN ACROSS DISTRICT 57

HEPPNER, OR – As wildfires continue to burn across Oregon and throughout House District 57, **Representative Gregory Smith (R-Heppner)** has called on the Oregon Legislature to convene an emergency special session to respond to the crisis. Smith urged legislative leadership and his colleagues in both chambers to return to Salem immediately rather than wait until the next regular session in January.

More than 200,000 acres are burning statewide after more than 8,000 lightning strikes in recent days sparked dozens of new fires. Governor Tina Kotek has invoked the state Conflagration Act, but the Oregon Department of Forestry reports that it has no remaining available complex incident management teams. Local crews and volunteers are stretched thin, and many fires remain at zero or low containment.

“District 57 is at the center of this disaster, with communities across Gilliam, Wheeler, Wasco, Jefferson, and Umatilla counties under evacuation and families losing their homes,” said Representative Smith.

He continued, “We cannot wait months for the next regular session while homes are burning this week. A special session would allow us to appropriate emergency funding, strengthen firefighting resources, and provide real support to the residents, farmers, ranchers, and businesses that have suffered devastating losses.”

FIRES BURNING IN DISTRICT 57

Gilliam and Wheeler counties have been hit especially hard. The following fires are active in or threatening District 57 as of July 20, 2026:

- **Rowe Creek Complex** – Approximately 126,000 acres and 0% contained in Wheeler and Wasco counties. The complex includes the Crosswhite Fire and several merged fires and is threatening Fossil and Richmond. Level 1, 2, and 3 evacuations are in place, and Highway 218 is closed.
- **Hoag Fire** – Approximately 50,400 acres and 55% contained in Gilliam County south of Arlington. Level 3 "Go Now" orders remain in effect, and multiple homes have been destroyed along French Charlie Road.
- **Hopkins Fire** – Burning in Gilliam County north of Condon. Level 3 "Go Now" orders are in effect near the airbase off Richmond Lane, with Level 1 "Be Ready" orders south of Condon. Highway 19 near Gwendolen has been impacted.

- **Akawa Butte Fire** – Approximately 5,000 acres and 3% contained in Jefferson County near Sisters.
- **Zen Fire** – Approximately 1,500 acres in Wasco County south of Clarno.
- **Brewer Fire** – Burning east of Madras in Jefferson County and managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry.
- **Hagen Fire** – Burning in Umatilla County, where evacuations have been upgraded to Level 3 "Go Now."
- **Lower Dry Creek Fire** – Near Weston and Milton-Freewater in Umatilla County. The fire destroyed several homes before crews reached containment and evacuation orders were lifted.

These fires, along with many others burning across Oregon, continue to spread while firefighting resources remain under significant strain.

THE NEED FOR A SPECIAL SESSION

Representative Smith is calling on the Legislature to:

- Appropriate emergency funding for wildfire suppression, recovery, and rebuilding efforts.
- Strengthen firefighting operations through additional personnel, mutual aid, and incident management resources.
- Provide direct assistance to displaced residents, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers affected by wildfire losses.
- Ensure the Oregon Department of Forestry has the personnel and resources necessary so that no region of the state is left without support during fire season.

“Our ranchers, first responders, volunteers, and local communities are carrying an extraordinary burden,” Smith said. “The Legislature has both the responsibility and the constitutional authority to act immediately. Oregonians deserve action now, not months from now.”

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

The Legislature does not have to wait for the Governor to convene a special session. Under Article IV, Section 10a of the Oregon Constitution and ORS 171.015, legislators may call themselves into a special session.

The process begins when members of each chamber file a written request with the Legislative Administrator. Ballots are then sent to every legislator, and if a majority of members in both the House and Senate approve, the presiding officers must issue a proclamation convening the Legislature within five days.

Representative Smith said this constitutional authority provides lawmakers with a direct path to respond to Oregon's wildfire emergency without unnecessary delay.

LOOKING AHEAD

Representative Smith said his immediate focus remains on protecting the people and communities of District 57 and ensuring they receive the support needed to recover. He pledged to work with members of both parties to pass emergency wildfire legislation as soon as the Legislature convenes.

Representative Greg Smith is a Republican representing House District 57, which includes all of Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler counties, and portions of Clackamas, Jefferson, Marion, Wasco, and Umatilla counties.

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