

SB 1514 A bill for Ashland's arson destroyed homes
Testimony of Jody Wisner for Senate Finance and Revenue



It's emotionally difficult to oppose legislation responsive to the hard luck of these families. However, this legislation sets a precedent for creating special assessments and does so at a time when our county tax assessors are hugely overworked.

John Philips shared the attached, which he got from the county assessor as a sample of the nine Ashland homes that are being replaced. Our analysis, shown in the boxes and the upper right corner, found the difference to between using current law and the SB 1514 formula is but \$327/year. The difference between the two Maximum Assessment Values (MAV) calculations is the increase in land value, not upgraded improvements.

We don't have information about square feet; we assume the assessor took that into consideration and used a home that was rebuilt with the same square feet in this sample. But we don't see why if a homeowner rebuilt a larger or upgraded home they should be advantaged by the prior assessment per square foot that is in the formula.

With arson being the only event that triggers the special assessment, and an application deadline of December 31, 2012, the bill will likely serve only the target constituents.

However, we are concerned about the precedent that is being set. The next destroyed homes could be from a forest fire, earthquake, or flood. Or constituents could be suffering from job loss or cancer or who have adopted children. Any of these could seek a bill providing a special assessment. We already have understaffed assessor's offices, and a wildly unfair property tax system. Starting down this road will only makes it worse.

Unless you can show us something in error in our calculation, we don't see that these taxpayers were adversely affected to the degree necessary to deserve legislative action, or merit risking precedent-setting action.

Tax Fairness Oregon urges your opposition to the bill.