



OREGON LEGISLATURE

August 4, 2021

Dear Governor Brown,

After recent conversations with some of your staff this past week, it's clear that you understand the scale of the crisis in Southern Oregon generated by large-scale illegal and unpermitted cannabis cultivation. The damaging impacts, including human trafficking of a labor force in conditions approaching slavery, severe aggravation of the drought through massive and systematic water theft, long-term damage to agricultural lands from various polluting practices, and the financial ruin of licensed growers whose compliance obligations make competition impossible, are hard to overstate. All this is taking place across the Rogue Valley with essential impunity.

We have an indisputable emergency, and need a prompt emergency response. Illegal growers are within weeks of leaving the area with their massively profitable harvest, which will most likely motivate them to return to Oregon for another round next year. We need to do everything possible to reduce that incentive by seizing as many of these illegal crops as we can this month, and doing what's possible to hold the responsible parties accountable. Local law enforcement leaders tell us they are doing what they can to prepare these kinds of operations, but simply lack the manpower to implement these raids. They tell us the most valuable assistance possible—really the only support that could make a difference before harvest—is the infusion of well-trained and appropriately armed police officers. With that in mind, we ask that you temporarily deploy without delay as many Oregon State Troopers as can be spared to assist county law enforcement in their overburdened efforts. We further ask you to ask the federal government to send trained DEA officers to join the effort.

It's too late to respond to this crisis in time to relieve the damage Southern Oregon's suffering this year; much work lies ahead if we're to manage these problems effectively next year. But it's not too late, if prompt emergency steps are taken, to deprive some portion of illegal growers of the massive profits that their crimes will generate, to relieve the suffering of many of their laborers, and to send an unmistakable message that Oregon is no longer open for their kind of business. I would hope we can show Southern Oregonians in coming days that we are in fact capable of timely action in the face of this invasion.

Thanks for your service and consideration.

Jeff Golden, Senate District 3

Lily Morgan, House District 3

Pam Marsh, House District 5

cc: Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Tina Kotek,
Elana Pirtle-Guiney, Governor's Office, Jeff Rhoades, Governor's Office,
OSP Superintendent Terri Davie