



# DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**TIM FREEMAN      CHRIS BOICE      TOM KRESS**

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

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 12, 2021**

## **Special Notice to the Citizens of Douglas County From your Douglas County Board of Commissioners**

We, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners understand that we are in unprecedented and trying times, and that people are desperate, especially those who have been forced out of business or out of a job. We understand that it may seem like help is too little or too far in between, or that nothing is being done at all. We appreciate the passion in which people want to enact change, but we also believe that the actions taken need to be measured, well thought out, and include a wide range of concerns. It is also imperative that we all work together to address these issues in a unified, civil and cooperative manner.

The Douglas County Board of Commissioners have been very involved in the response to the pandemic since its inception. We are working hard to try and minimize the economic impact of the pandemic, while trying to keep our citizens safe and healthy. It has been an incredible and unparalleled balancing act. In doing this work, everyone needs to understand that the safety of our citizens goes beyond the spread of COVID-19, it also includes their financial stability, as well as their mental and emotional wellbeing, and the ability to feel safe and comfortable in our communities. The disastrous financial impact of COVID-19 certainly goes beyond affecting an individual's physical health.

Douglas County has always been a caring and compassionate county, filled with caring and compassionate communities. We have on more than one occasion, put our differences aside in order to help one another. The actions taken today will be remembered tomorrow. The kind of community Douglas County will be when this pandemic is over, will be defined by how we treat one another today.

We have been asked by numerous constituents about our position on the "Citizens Against Tyranny" declaration and plan that has surfaced in our community. Again, we understand the passion, emotion, desperation and need some feel to do something to help those most affected economically due to the state mandates. But we can-not, in good conscience support this effort. Similar to how Sheriff Hanlin expressed his concerns over the same declaration, we do not feel singling people out, publicly shaming them, and potentially making them a target for retaliation for doing, or being merely accused of doing, what they believed to be the right thing in protecting themselves or their neighbors, is the right approach. We do not feel like banning people from businesses, businesses who now more than ever are dependent upon any revenue they can get, is the right approach. We do not feel like banning people from businesses or access to the very things they need to survive is the right approach. We do not believe that forcing Elected Officials to do something, under the threat of consequences or retaliation, is the right approach.

The Douglas County Board of Commissioners have been and will continue to, do everything in our power to help our small businesses stay open. As the Local Public Health Authority, your Commissioners have openly chosen not to enforce the Governor's mandates relating to COVID-19. We feel like providing the public with the correct information and encouraging to follow Local Public Health recommendations yields higher compliance, than attempting to force someone into compliance. Senator Heard made this point fairly well in his recent speech on the Senate Floor. That is one area where we agree with the Senator.

As your Commissioners, we have actively worked on programs to help our local businesses:

- *We recently completed a business grant program, initiated by us to help local businesses that are required to have an environmental health license with the county in order to operate. The grant allocated up to \$350,000 in county grant funding and offered an opportunity for those businesses to apply and receive a \$500 grant, as a refund for the cost of their 2020 health license. Plus, they have also decided to waive the 2021 environmental health licensing fees, and have refunded or applied payment to 2022 licensing for those businesses that already paid for their 2021 licenses.*
- *We were the First County in Oregon to apply for Phase 1 and Phase 2 reopening for businesses earlier in the pandemic, and were able to do so because of the good work the people of Douglas County had done in keeping the case count low.*
- *We recently distributed 1.47 million dollars in COVID Relief Funds to local businesses adversely affected by the pandemic, and when 22 qualifying businesses didn't get funding because the money ran out, we allocated an additional 350,000.00 to the fund to make sure that every qualifying business got the relief they needed. We also paid the administration fees for the grant administration from General Fund so 100% of the available funds could go to help small businesses.*



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- *We have expressed our opinions on numerous conference calls with the Governor and State Officials about keeping our businesses open.*
- *We have sent letters and proposals to the Governor, expressing our concern for the unnecessary mandates and closures placed on our local businesses.*
- *We have issued several statements and press releases voicing our support for our local businesses staying open. To review and read copies of our press releases, statements and positions, please log onto: [www.co.douglas.or.us](http://www.co.douglas.or.us) and click on the press release link.*
- *We recently encouraged city, county and state officials, as well as local chambers, councils and business leaders, to join us in supporting the business reopening plan recently submitted to Oregon's Governor and State lawmakers issued by the [Oregon State Chamber of Commerce \(OSCC\)](#). The clear and concise plan details the basis for their timely and profound recommendation that aims to help our businesses hardest hit by COVID-19, to pull through this economic recession and overcome their financial hardships.*
- *We have provided daily updates with accurate information with links to available assistance programs and services. Residents can sign up to receive our daily updates and e-Newsletters by clicking on the link on our county website at: [www.co.douglas.or.us](http://www.co.douglas.or.us).*
- *We have encouraged our citizens and businesses to stay healthy by managing their personal and business health during COVID.*

Your Douglas County Board of Commissioners has been very active and involved in supporting our Business Community since the pandemic began, and we will continue to do so until it is over. It's because of everyone's hard work that all businesses are open today.

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**Contact Tamara Howell**, Douglas County Emergency Communications & Community Engagement Specialist. Public Information Officer (PIO). (541) 670-2804 cell - (541) 957-4896 office - [tjhowell@co.douglas.or.us](mailto:tjhowell@co.douglas.or.us)