

**DEB PATTERSON
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 10**



OREGON STATE SENATE

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

Re: Support for \$4,275,000 Federal Investment, Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley,

I have the honor to represent Senate District 10, which includes the city of Monmouth and Western Oregon University. I am writing to offer strong support for Western Oregon University's request for \$4,275,000 in federal funding to advance the Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative.

Rice Auditorium is a regional resource that serves students, families, and community members throughout Polk County and the mid-Willamette Valley.

The proposed renovation will bring the facility into full ADA compliance, modernize Fire Life Safety systems, upgrade the stage and technical production infrastructure, and expand instructional spaces supporting workforce development.

Professional-grade arts and performance facilities provide students with hands-on experience that translates into careers in education, design, production, and cultural management.

I urge your favorable consideration of this important investment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deb Patterson".

Deb Patterson



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for \$4,275,000 Federal Investment – Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley,

As the State Representative serving the Monmouth community and Western Oregon University, I write in strong support of Western Oregon University's request for \$4,275,000 in federal funding for the Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative.

Rice Auditorium is one of the only large-scale performance venues in Polk County and serves as a shared civic asset for the university, the City of Monmouth, the City of Independence, and the broader mid-Willamette Valley.

This project will modernize critical infrastructure, address ADA compliance deficiencies, upgrade Fire Life Safety systems, and provide professional-grade instructional and performance spaces that strengthen workforce development.

Western Oregon University is a cornerstone institution in my district. Its vitality is directly connected to the economic stability and growth of our rural communities. Investments in university infrastructure generate measurable regional impact — supporting student success, attracting visitors, strengthening local businesses, and expanding employment pathways for graduates.

I respectfully urge your support for this federal investment in Oregon's 20th House District and the broader Polk County region.

Sincerely,

Paul Evans
State Representative
Oregon House District 20





151 Main Street W. | Monmouth, Oregon | 97361

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley,

Re: Support for \$4,275,000 Congressional Directed Spending Request – Rice Auditorium Renovation at Western Oregon University

On behalf of the City of Monmouth, I write in strong and unequivocal support of Western Oregon University's request for \$4,275,000 in Congressional Directed Spending for the Rice Auditorium renovation project titled "Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative."

Western Oregon University is requesting \$4,275,000 in federal funding to renovate Rice Auditorium—a shared university and community performance facility—bringing it into compliance with ADA and Fire Life Safety standards, modernizing the stage and fly system, expanding the scene shop and technical production spaces, and fully renovating adjacent restrooms.

Rice Auditorium is a shared civic and cultural asset that serves the University, the City of Monmouth, and the broader Polk County community. As one of the only large performance venues in the county, it plays a central role in community events, regional performances, and civic gatherings.

This project represents a strategic investment in workforce development. Students in theatre, music, dance, and technical production will train in professional-grade facilities that mirror industry standards, improving employment readiness and strengthening Oregon's creative economy.

The renovated auditorium will also serve as a regional economic driver, increasing event capacity, attracting visitors from across the Willamette Valley, and generating secondary economic activity for local restaurants, retailers, and hospitality businesses.



As a university community, Monmouth's economic vitality and quality of life are closely linked to Western Oregon University's strength. Investment in this facility strengthens both our cultural infrastructure and our long-term economic sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration of this important investment in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rochelle Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the name.

Rochelle Anderson
City Manager
City of Monmouth



INDEPENDENCE

Oregon's Story Begins Here

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley:

I am writing to express my strong support for Western Oregon University's request for \$4,275,000 in federal funding for the renovation of Rice Auditorium through the "Western Oregon University Arts and Community Revitalization Initiative."

Rice Auditorium is one of the only large-scale performance venues in Polk County and serves as a significant regional asset. Residents of Independence regularly attend performances, lectures, and community events hosted at the facility, making it an important shared resource for the broader Monmouth–Independence community and surrounding areas.

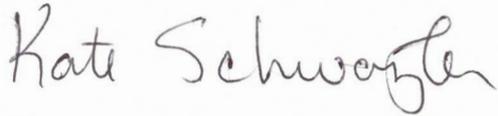
The proposed renovations address critical infrastructure and accessibility needs, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance improvements, upgrades to Fire Life Safety systems, modernization of stage and fly infrastructure, and expansion of instructional production spaces. These improvements are necessary to ensure the facility remains safe, accessible, and functional for students, performers, and community members alike. Beyond its cultural importance, this project carries meaningful economic and workforce implications. Arts and cultural infrastructure are recognized economic drivers. According to Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts and culture sector generates approximately \$687 million in statewide economic activity and supports more than 22,000 jobs in Oregon. A modernized Rice Auditorium will enhance the University's ability to attract regional audiences and host larger-scale events, benefiting local hospitality, retail, and service-sector businesses throughout the mid-Willamette Valley.

Equally important, the project strengthens workforce preparation. Professional-grade instructional spaces in music, theatre, lighting, sound, and stage production provide students with transferable skills in design, project management, audio-visual technology, and event production. These competencies support career pathways across multiple industries and contribute to the region's long-term economic vitality.

Investing in Western Oregon University is an investment in the stability, economic health, and quality of life of the broader Monmouth–Independence region. I strongly support this request and appreciate your continued leadership in advancing projects that strengthen Oregon's communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Schwarzler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Mayor Kate Schwarzler

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

President
Erik Andersson

**2025-2026
Executive Committee**

Chair
Tony Schacher
Salem Electric

Vice-Chair
Scott Snyder
The Grand Hotel in Salem

Secretary/Treasurer
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Ryan Allbritton
Willamette Valley Bank

Directors at Large
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Garmin AT, Inc.

Liz Schaecher
Oregon Aglink

Cyrus Ward
Aldrich CPAs + Advisors

Re: Support for \$4,275,000 Federal Investment – Rice Auditorium Renovation at Western Oregon University

Dear Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley:

On behalf of the Strategic Economic Development Corporation (SEDCOR), we strongly support this request.

Western Oregon University has requested \$4,275,000 in federal funding to renovate Rice Auditorium under the project titled “Training the Next Generation of Performing Artists.” This investment will modernize one of the only large-scale performance venues in Polk County by addressing critical Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance deficiencies, upgrading Fire Life Safety systems, renovating stage and fly infrastructure, and expanding instructional production spaces that directly support workforce development in performing arts and technical theatre.

Arts and cultural infrastructure are proven economic drivers. According to Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts and culture sector generates \$687 million in statewide economic activity and supports over 22,000 jobs. A modernized Rice Auditorium will attract regional visitors, increase event capacity, and support local hospitality, retail, and service-sector businesses throughout the mid-Willamette Valley.

This project also represents a direct investment in workforce preparation. Professional-grade training facilities in music, theatre, lighting, sound, and stage production equip students with transferable skills in design, project management, audio-visual technology, and event production. These competencies translate into meaningful employment opportunities across multiple sectors.

Anchor institutions like Western Oregon University are essential to regional competitiveness, talent development, and long-term economic diversification in the mid-Willamette Valley. For these reasons, we respectfully urge your full support of this \$4,275,000 federal funding request.

Sincerely,



President