

Kulongoski plans boost to timber industry

By Tony Hazarian
Of the Emerald

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ted Kulongoski presented his plan to revitalize Oregon's troubled wood products industry at a north Eugene lumberyard Friday.

Speaking under overcast skies, Kulongoski gave the industry a sunny forecast by proposing plans for pursuing new markets for processed wood products, re-tooling and modernizing mills, developing new wood products and re-bidding existing timber contracts.

"State government can provide the direction, leadership and assistance to the wood products industry in making the basic changes that will assure the industry its strength for the future," Kulongoski said.

"I will not wait, as (Gov.) Victor Atiyeh has done, until six weeks before the election to either recognize the problem or begin to work on the solution. I say that because, if action is not taken immediately, our wood products industry will continue to decay," he said.

The University and the state's higher education system would play an important role in his plan, Kulongoski said. They would provide necessary research and working closely with the timber industry. This research can help "find new and more valuable ways" to increase timber production, he said.

Kulongoski's main priority would be finding new markets for processed and manufactured wood products, nationally and internationally, "so that

Oregon can get the maximum value out of every tree cut in our state."

To compete in these new markets, Kulongoski said, Oregon's mills need to re-tool and modernize.

"As our globe shrinks and our markets increase, Oregon's lumber firms must be able to cut to the specifications of builders in the Orient and elsewhere in order to make sales," he said.

"It's an acknowledged fact that exporting processed wood products creates three times as many jobs as exporting raw logs," he said.

Kulongoski vowed that as governor he would work with the Board of Forestry and the state forestry department to sharpen forest management on state and private lands.

He would also immediately propose voiding existing timber contracts on land not being harvested and rebidding them.

"I recognize fully well those contracts were made in an era of optimism and timber speculation," Kulongoski said. "But the reality is those high-priced contracts are keeping some Oregon timber from being harvested and keeping many Oregonians from going back to work in our mills and forests."

Kulongoski said he would also lobby for the industry on the federal level and would work with state representatives in formulating a state wilderness bill "that both assures adequate timber for the economic health of the timber industry and protects our scenic wilderness resources."



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Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ted Kulongoski announced his plans for revitalizing Oregon's wood products industry by modernizing and developing new products and markets.

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