

I'm Virginia Topham and I raise cattle in the Sprague River valley. My husband and I bought our ranch 42 years ago. We didn't have a sugar daddy, we built what we have with a strong back and these two hands.

We have spent decades developing a premium herd of Salers cattle. We sell our breeding stock all over the west and into the Midwest and Canada. Our natural, grass-fed, free range beef is marketed all over the west as well. We've worked hard to be competitive and provide our customers with healthy, sustainable products year after year. We use solar energy. We irrigate efficiently. We rotate grazing. We nurture the land and all that lives upon it.

Our customers appreciate the fact that we aren't a corporation, we're a family. They buy our livestock and our beef because they can see how much we love the land and our cattle. We protect the ranch and do everything we can to make it as prosperous as possible. It's good business, and it's good for the land both for now and for the future--- these go hand in hand.

We love this valley. This is where we put down our roots. We lost our first son here and his ashes are scattered over the land. Our remaining children, ages 25 and 27, want to continue this life we started. They would be here today, but someone had to feed the cattle.

Last summer, when our surface water was shut off, feed became scarce. In some fields, mere drinking water was denied to livestock and what little grass was left got burnt by the sun and wasted. We were forced to reduce our reputation herd by a third. That's a huge loss to us. Our only salvation from losing the ranch that we took over 40 years to build, was the irrigation well we drilled 30 years ago. That was the only thing that kept us going.

This land has been irrigated for 150 years. The soil types and grass species are reliant on summer irrigation. We got a preview last summer of burned up vegetation and air pollution from blowing dust. Once the rest of the irrigation is jerked from the land, this beautiful valley

will become a desolate wasteland. Our valley is home to hundreds of thousands of birds and wildlife in the summer. What are they going to do if these enhanced wetlands suddenly vanish? How many thousands of birds and wild animals are going to die from this?

House Bill 4044 is vital to us. We are a family ranch. What you decide today will determine my future, and my family's future. Our lives and careers are in your hands. So, what do I tell my children when I get home? What is your answer? They deserve the opportunity to carry on the family tradition. Do you agree? Will you give them that chance?

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to speak.

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