

Umatilla County

Board of County Commissioners



Commissioners

February 18, 2015

George L. Murdock
541-278-6202

W. Lawrence Givens
541-278-6203

William J. Elfering
541-278-6201

Representative Brian Clem
Chair, Committee on Rural Communities, Land use and Water

RE: HB 2894

Executive Secretary
Melinda Slatt
541-278-6204

County Counsel
Douglas Olsen
541-278-6208

Budget Officer
Bob Heffner
541-278-6209

Honorable Clem and Committee Members:

Umatilla County is opposed to House Bill 2894 as it would essentially provide veto power to irrigation districts. The existing land use review process, administered by city and county planning departments, provides the necessary legal and practical tools to coordinate with irrigation districts. Existing law, namely ORS 92.090(6) guarantees irrigation districts have a voice in the land partition and subdivision review process.

Umatilla County enjoys a very positive and cooperative relationship with our irrigation districts. There are over 30 irrigation districts, water improvement districts and water control districts in Umatilla County. Our Planning Department provides notice to those entities for land use decisions and incorporates recommendations shared by those districts. In our view, there is not a problem with that process.

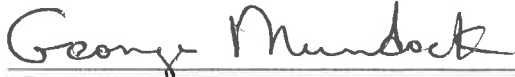
We understand that water entities have challenges getting cooperation with certain municipalities. While that is unfortunate and should be corrected, we do not believe the proposed bill is the appropriate remedy. Already irrigation districts are required to review partition plats. Further role in the process would have the unintended consequence of creating a second, parallel review process with no obvious venue for appeal. That could result in negative consequences for irrigation districts and landowners.

We encourage you to oppose HB 2894. We would be happy to work with your committee, with Oregon Water Resources Congress and water districts to foster a better understanding of the process. For additional background, please see the memo from our Planning Director.


Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners



George L. Murdock, Chair


W. Lawrence Givens, Commissioner
William J. Elfering, Commissioner

Cc: Senator Hansell
Representative Greg Smith
Representative Greg Baretto