

This is submitted in opposition to SB 1575

This bill, like its House counterpart, HB 4079, seeks to advance the laudable goal of affordable housing. It does so by holding affordable housing hostage to interests whose single minded goal over the past four decades has been the erosion and emasculation of Oregon's land use system. Bills such as this are Oregon's equivalent of the constant measures introduced to repeal the Affordable Care Act. The lack of affordable housing is a symptom of a larger problem that will not go away by opening up Oregon farmland for a goal that will not be achieved.

Politics is the art of the possible. Public policy is the political craft of setting out today what our grandchildren and their descendants will live with when you have passed on from this body. Legacy is how politics and public policy is judged by the future. This bill tampers with the land use legacy handed down to us through SB 100.

This bill seems to reflect how little today we appreciate what SB 100 accomplished and what it stimulated. Our land use policy gave us a recognition that we are Oregonians first, dependent upon the lands that nourish and sustain us environmentally, agriculturally, and economically.

The great and under appreciated legacy of SB 100 is that it brought into focus that we are Oregonians first, and property developers second. The great and good legacy of SB 100 is that it set for us a high bar requiring us to have a wider view of what we are than this bill does. This bill erodes and undermines what I believe it means to be an Oregonian and it dismisses and diminishes the legacy we have inherited and tarnishes that which we will pass on to our children.

SB 1575 undermines the legacy of land use by allowing any city to expand its UGB without a showing of need, providing some undefined percentage of the housing in the expansion area is available for affordable housing. This is a perfect example of undermining the future for some ephemeral short term profit.

Our land use system prioritizes land use with a focus on present and future sustainability. Farmland is not "preserved" as if it were an Oregonian version of what life was like in the past. Farmland, upon which our future depends, has protection solely because of our commitment to long term and future based considerations. SB 1575 takes what we most seek to preserve and places it on the auction block. We know from our past history how despicable it is to auction our heritage for short term gain.

The travesty of this bill is that it takes farm land out of production under the guise of "affordable housing." Affordable housing becomes the sheep's clothing behind which hides a more base goal which seeks to make farmers, who understand better than many the importance of towns and cities, the problem rather than the solution. Our land use system ensures that communities are livable. Livable cities include affordable housing. This bill does not provide affordable housing. This bill allows developers to ignore the land that is within the UGB in order to develop that which is outside, and thus erode the principles that make us Oregonians.

This bill takes the Oregon out of Oregon. Instead of prioritizing land within the state, it prioritizes local political interests above the interests of Oregon and of her future.

I urge you to vote against this bill.

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