

Hopefully there are enough people among the Representatives and the Legislative Staff who will bring common sense to this legislative session when it comes to bills that adversely affect farms and forests and those who operate them.

My father worked for room and board on a farm on Cabbage Hill, while attending Corbett High School, beginning around the time he turned 16 in 1929. In a few years, he began to acquire farm land and operated his own farm starting around 1936, and farmed until his death in 2006 at age 93. I am one of his four children who inherited the farm. My two brothers continue to operate the 200 acre family farm for all of us, less than half of which is tillable acreage.

Most people do not realize the long hours and dirty conditions that farmers endure in order to provide farm products for local consumption. The younger generations seem to think there is an endless conveyor belt that delivers food to their favorite grocery store for their pleasure. Most of the younger generations have never had to work in the way that a farmer does, in order to provide food for their family and themselves, and to earn their livelihood through the sale of their crops to consumers.

A wise legislature established Special Assessments for farm and forest lands many years ago, and exempted farm equipment from taxation as personal property. That wise legislature recognized that taxing farmers out of business did no one any good.

Tax benefits must be provided in order for farmers to survive and provide the food we eat. Farmers cannot absorb rising taxes – they have to pass it on to the consumers, or go out of business. Then the consumers bemoan the high price or lack of availability of food, which they can no longer afford to serve to their families. This cycles into inflation and no one is any better off as a result. If the farmers go out of business, then who will feed us all?

If taxes are increased on farm land and equipment, it will remove a necessary benefit that has allowed farmers to continue to operate and to provide food for you and everyone else in our local areas and beyond.

When it comes to taxes and taxation, leave the farmers and forest owners alone. Tax benefits for farmers are a program that was well thought out at the time, and it continues to provide the benefits as intended, to promote the well being of all.

If the rest of this revenue bill HB 2859 serves any legitimate purpose for the other parties that it affects, then strip out each and every word that has any effect on farms and forests, and let the rest of the bill survive. If every word that has any effect on farms and forests cannot be removed, then vote against the bill in its entirety. If the rest of the bill is legitimate, it will undoubtedly surface again in the future, and can be enacted in a later session.

If HB 2859 cannot be fixed, kill it.

I am writing this on my own behalf as a farmland owner, and for the benefit of my fulltime farming brothers, Chris Winters and Marven Winters, partners in Winters Farms, located between Troutdale and Corbett. Those of you from the Portland area may well have purchased their products at various farmers markets around Portland and in Beaverton, where they have sold for close to 40 years.

For the benefit of my farm family and all other farm families, and the resulting benefit that comes to all consumers of locally produced crops, I ask that you absolutely oppose the negative effect of HB 2859 on farms and forests and those who operate them.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Howard E Winters  
[hwinters46@gmail.com](mailto:hwinters46@gmail.com)