

Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB2859

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Don Cersovski. I come to you in opposition to HB2859.

My family owns and operates a small century family farm in Linn County. We are currently trying to transition the operation to the next generation. I don't know if it can happen. In the last several meetings of the Legislature, small, especially labor-intensive, farms have been hit with all kinds of expensive rules and regulations concerning who we hire, how we compensate them, and working conditions that do not work in the natural resource community. If I could magically pick up my farm and move it, it would already be in Idaho where they appreciate and value the agricultural community.

I am very strongly opposed to HB 2859. Once again the Legislative body is willing to break its promises to family farms, woodlot owners, and other natural resource producers to avoid repairing the unrealistic contracts with the public employees unions, PERS in particular.

When the state legislature established the land use laws to protect our natural resources and those who produce and protect them, it was understood that family farms, woodlot owners, and others in related natural resource fields would be impacted with restrictions that would make such properties less valuable on the real estate market, and make it much harder to parcel out small lots for greater value. That is why the farm deferral assessment came into law. The same conditions apply today as they did then. We are still faced with the problem of urbanization onto some of the most productive land in Oregon. The farm deferral helps to balance the pressure to sell.

The personal property exemption for farms and ranches was granted by the State Legislature for very similar reasons. I have several trucks that are driven less than 300 miles each year. I still pay the same registration fees that a truck that is driven 100,000 mile in the same year. Very little of the equipment on my farm is used more than 30 days in an entire year. Even so, I cannot operate my farm without harvesting equipment, tillage equipment, soil treatment equipment, and irrigation equipment. Some of this equipment is not used every year as my farm is diversified and crops change yearly. It will be a terrible burden on the farm if this equipment sustains a yearly tax. In fact, it will most likely be the final straw that makes the farm unprofitable, and yet another family farm that survived the generations for over a century will become history. What a sad legacy.

Please do not let this pernicious bill see the light of day. I beg you. Do not pass it out of this committee. Please kill it now.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the privilege of addressing you. I am confident that you will see the damage this bill will do to my family farm, and will support me in doing what is right. You will kill this bill,.

Thank you.