

Testimony from Scott Russell March 1, 2017

RE: HB 2859

Dear Rep. Phil Barnhart,

Our family has a tree farm in Columbia County which my wife and I started in 1974. We have been working on it and adding to it along with our sons and grandchildren. This farm and the income it produces is our version of PERS, although we do not anticipate the retirement funding you will receive. If this bill passes our retirement is gone. We have purchased logged over land, planted trees and taken care of them for 43 years. It takes 50 + years for a tree to grow and during these years does not provide income for maintenance, overhead, TAXES, etc.

Some of the side benefits of our tree farm are the clean water we all drink, the air we breathe, habitat for wild animals, and local jobs for our communities. Passing this bill will force us and the many forest owners to sell our land for development. I would think that this flies in the face of land use planning. Today our home is on the land and we have two rental houses which were here before we arrived. Under current zoning we could have 26 houses before we even consider code exception building. We have no plans to build with the current tax situation but may be forced to do so with the passing of this HB 2859. We gave up the right to build as many houses as the land could provide in exchange for the reduced taxes on our forest land. Seems like an interesting case, I would assume that with the increased taxes we would be able to develop the land as we could have before Land Use Planning.

I understand the situation of the state's financial problems. The forest folks did not create that. The installation of the PERS was obvious to me that it would bankrupt the state. I suggest you fix that, don't destroy the land use laws and private forests. I remember talking with Mike Mussman, the log buyer for Weyerhaeuser, who told me that Weyerhaeuser bought more logs of ten loads or less from private forests than they harvested from their own land.



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