



"Onions Our Specialty"

Murakami Produce Co, LLC

P.O. Box 9 • 1431 S.E. 1st St. • Ontario, Oregon 97914
Phone (541) 889-3131



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Chair Lininger, Members of the Economic Development and Trade Committee,
Speaker Kotek and Representative Bentz,

My name is Grant Kitamura of Ontario, Oregon; I have an onion packing shipping business in Ontario, Murakami Produce Company. I'm here in support of House Bill 2012 sponsored by Representatives Kotek and Bentz.

House Bill 2012 would establish an economic development region here in Oregon on the Idaho border that would help us to create and fund a more even playing field with Idaho. Malheur County has a population of 31,000, the county is almost 10,000 square miles, we are very sparsely populated. We are 375 miles from the Willamette Valley and even in a different time zone. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy; cattle, onions, sugar beets, feed crops and seed crops are our primary sources of revenue. Currently, we are at a great disadvantage as Idaho laws and regulations are more business friendly, in fact there are several major businesses that are moving from Malheur County into Idaho for those advantages this year. Major winter snow storms destroyed many buildings and some are choosing to relocate to Idaho with their insurance proceeds. The two major cities in Malheur County, Nyssa and Ontario are border towns, I am sitting one mile from Idaho as I write this letter.

We need this proposed economic development region to help prevent the loss of businesses and jobs in Oregon and help create ways to attract businesses. The creation of an industrial site with a transload facility would be of tremendous value to this effort.

1. We are very far from our markets and transportation is a real issue. Trucks have to deadhead from densely populated areas where they have

unloaded their freight to come to Malheur County to load our onions. There are many points between Ontario and Seattle or Portland where truckers can find loads, thus we are at a great disadvantage. A local transloading site is greatly needed. This bi-modal site would bring freight from a large radius, including Idaho for shipment. The industrial site would offer locations for processing and other added-value activities for our ag products....more businesses, more jobs.

2. A Border Economic Development region would allow us to work with state and local agencies in enhancing the region to better compete with Idaho.
 - a) I feel that Social Safety Nets compete with my business when we need seasonal employees at harvest time, hopefully one of these days seasonal employment would not be a factor in employees losing those programs in our region.
 - b) Idaho zoning laws are more flexible than in Oregon, hopefully one of these days we can attain some flexibility in our region.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today and thank you for recognizing our situation here on the Idaho-Oregon border.

Sincerely,



Grant Kitamura