

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

Please accept this email as my testimony in opposition to SB 432 and SB 602. I live in Sisters, Oregon, and I will be unable to attend the hearing on April 6th.

OREGON'S LAND USE LAWS ARE NOT CAUSING RURAL COUNTIES TO LOSE POPULATION, AND SUSPENDING THOSE LAWS WILL NOT FIX THE PROBLEM.

All of our surrounding states are losing population in rural counties. Nevada, Idaho, Washington and California are all losing population in their rural counties. None of these states have land use laws like Oregon's.

In fact, the decline of population in rural counties is a nationwide phenomenon that goes back for many years. Rural counties from Florida to Maine, Texas to Montana, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and in every other state in the union have lost population over the last few federal censuses. And the problem is ongoing. A graphic from 2016, just last year, shows the problem is continuing nearly everywhere. (See attached chart below.)

People young and old have continued to move from rural counties to urban areas for many years. This has been an ongoing trend throughout America ever since our horse and buggy days gave way to the industrial revolution and the gradual shift toward ever more mechanized farming practises.

Since this is a problem that plainly is not unique to Oregon, it is clear that Oregon's land use laws are not causing it. And so chipping away at our land use laws won't solve it. Quite likely, it will make things worse.

Fifty years ago Oregon embarked upon a grand experiment led by our far sighted Republican governor, Tom McCall to save Oregon's shrinking agricultural lands and our rural culture. That experiment worked, and it is still working. Oregon is one of the fastest growing states in this country. Yet our agricultural lands have been largely preserved, along with our rural culture, and urban sprawl has been held in check.

A quick trip into California, Idaho or Washington will demonstrate that our neighbors have not been so fortunate.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony. I would ask that these bills be allowed to die in this committee.

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