

April 3, 2017

Rep. Brian Clem, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Or 97301

Rep. Clem and Members of the Committee:

After much soul-searching, I have decided to oppose HB 3050, which puts additional requirements on siting solar facilities on EFU land.

The rules which allow a maximum 12 acre solar facility on EFU land were determined in a process which brought many stakeholders to the table and they balance the need to protect farm land with the need to produce clean energy to meet Oregon's ambitious plans to replace a significant percentage of fossil-based electrical energy by 2025. Adding an alternative site study to the process adds unnecessary expense and delays since almost all farm land in the Willamette Valley is considered high value. This requirement may discourage solar development but won't necessarily protect farm land, which already faces tremendous pressure from urbanization.

To be clear, my sister and I own farm land near Woodburn and we hope to use approximately 10 acres of our 185 to site a solar facility. We thought long and hard about whether this was appropriate because we have a long history of supporting protection for farm land. But we concluded: 1) alternative, sustainable energy is important to Oregon; 2) we can convert the property back to farm land if the lease is not renewed by either party; 3) considering our ages, having a consistent return on the solar facility will help us financially, as it will other farm families facing similar "aging out" issues. There are many crops which have a higher per acre return and I do not believe that every farmer will want to convert to solar just because they can. The decision is one based on factors unique to each farm, especially family farms. I also believe that the Portland Metro area and the Willamette Valley are the highest energy users in the state. I believe that it is not only fair, but cost effective, to have energy generation close to the end users.

I strongly support land use regulation, but I also believe that alternative energy is important and that the current rules protect farm land. That is why I urge the committee to vote no on HB 3050.

Sincerely,

Carla Mikkelson
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