

CARL WILSON
State Representative

DISTRICT 03
JOSEPHINE COUNTY
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Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair

RE: SB 1037

April 12, 2017

Chair Dembrow, Vice-chair Olsen and Committee Members.

Over the past several weeks, I have received many, many, letters urging me to take a position on SB 1037, a bill that would once again declare Josephine County a GMO-Free zone and allow other local governments across the state to enforce GE seed bans as well. I thank my engaged constituents for those letters.

I have also heard from a lesser number of farmers, who have urged me not to support the intent of SB 1037.

Along the way, I've been reminded of the May 2014 election, where the citizens of Josephine County voted resoundingly to ban the cultivation of genetically engineered crops within the county. I realize it has been the desire of many to have Josephine County be a GMO-Free zone. I'm also aware of the legislative action taken in response to the Josephine and Jackson County votes, resulting in nullification of the GE crop ban vote in Josephine County.

I've attempted to do my due diligence. I've read numerous publications on the topic, including the Governor's Task Force report, and a report produced by the National Academy of Sciences. I've filled my calendar with meetings: with individuals and advocates, farmers of every stripe, the Department of Agriculture, the Farm Bureau, local businesses and individuals...just about everything I've been able to add to my schedule.

Sadly, there seems to be no middle ground at the moment. Both groups of farmers believe they will be ruined if one side or the other prevails. The fact that peaceful coexistence is practiced successfully in nearly every other farming community in the country means nothing at present.

That said, I remain concerned about the possible impact of GE crops, such as bent grass, getting away from test plots or jumping rivers. That very scenario is of great concern to grass seed growers in the Willamette Valley. I realize that cross-pollination can occur among conventional farmers as well.

Once again, I believe that the answer is peaceful coexistence. Farmers all over this state have learned to communicate and rotate. There is a process for farmers who receive injury. I'm not sure GE seed bans are appropriate public policy in all communities. But, if this bill makes it to the House floor, I will vote for the bill. By significant majority, in a public vote, the folks in Josephine County said they wanted the local government to be able to enact a GE seed ban. I am their representative and I will support them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Carl Wilson
Oregon House of Representatives
District 03 – Grants Pass & Josephine County