

To Oregon Senate Rules Committee Members:

I oppose SB 432 and SB 644 which would effectively remove land use protections for eastern Oregon agricultural lands.

SB 432 would apply to counties under 50,000 that had no population growth between the 2000-2010 decennial census, as well as to the cities in those counties. The most recent version would allow a qualifying city or county to take an "exception" to any land use planning Goal, anywhere, for almost any reason. The broad list of reasons includes:

- Creating opportunities for business development in rural or urban areas.
- Retaining and expanding existing businesses, in rural or urban areas.
- Providing housing in rural or urban areas.

Therefore, a city or county could take an exception that covers all or part of the jurisdiction for any of these broad reasons, effectively negating urban growth boundaries, exclusive farm use zoning, requirements for affordable housing, natural resource protections (other than a sage grouse exemption), and more. *It is, effectively, a removal of the statewide land use planning Goals.*

SB 644, and the various revisions to it that have been proposed, would limit the ability of eastern Oregon local communities and farmers to prevent large-scale mining operations, like the [Grassy Mountain](#) gold mine, on farmland and core wildlife habitat areas.

The bill gives large mineral mines the same priority status as farming on Eastern Oregon's farmlands, regardless of the impacts of the mining on nearby farming operations and without assurance of any benefits to the local economy. The bill also:

- Will give miners a "right to mine" on farmland and an automatic legal defense to negligence and trespass claims arising out of mining operations.
- Will prevent holders of grazing leases from commenting on the impacts of nearby mining operation.
- Will prevent local governments from limiting the impacts of mining operations or putting conditions on mining permits to prevent habitat loss or impacts on neighboring landowners.

Eastern Oregon's farming communities, iconic places, and critical wildlife habitats are at risk of being destroyed by large-scale mining operations. **Mining is not a farm use. Large-scale mining will negatively impact farming operations and wildlife habitats in Eastern Oregon, with no assurance of local economic benefit.** These large-scale mineral mines should not be permitted on farmland without appropriate limitations.

Please do not approve SB 432 or SB 644.

Thank you,

Walt Mintkeski
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