



Commissioner Patty Dorroh Harney County, Oregon

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March 4, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction

Co-chairs Dembrow and Power and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oregon's largest and most frontier county – Harney County – as well as on behalf of frontier Oregon agriculture, I write in opposition of HB 2020.

This perhaps well-intended, but rushed, legislative effort is deeply flawed and has serious equity and economic impacts that will harm Oregon overall and devastate the east side.

Action that will bring hardship to so many must at least be considered within the context of what will be gained. The science and data show that Oregon has a relatively small carbon footprint, and that the desired carbon reductions, while ambitious, will not achieve any significant global impact on climate change. The hardships, economic impacts, and unintended consequences of the increased price of energy, fuel, and ultimately the provision of goods and services, will affect all but the most wealthy. Jobs will be lost, businesses will close, farms will go under, the cost of public education will sky-rocket, and remote, rural people will have to forgo traveling for medical care and other necessities.

Please slow down, delay the bill, and improve it across all its elements.

Devastating

My county and eastern Oregon will be devastated by this bill as it reads now. It is projected to increase fuel prices by 16 cents per gallon in just the first year. That would leave Oregonians stuck paying the third highest gas prices in the entire country. This would be devastating to rural Harney County and eastern Oregon agriculture.

Remoteness and Distance

Distance is a normal part of frontier life, but the impact of HB 2020 on the east side of Oregon—the drastic impact on fuel prices— is ***not fair, not equitable, not right***. The distances we drive are a physical reality that will not be affected in any significant way by the introduction of green jobs and electric cars. That may work for urban and suburban places, but not frontier, agricultural Oregon.

Already Green

This bill is unfair to Frontier Rural Oregon – the state’s great carbon sequester. We already produce the greenest scenario possible with our tens of thousands of acres of national forest, sagebrush, grasses, and open skies.

It was a huge stretch to support HB 2017, the Transportation Bill, which also increased gas prices. At least with that bill we are funding infrastructure that serves the entire state in a reasonably equitable manner.

Agriculture and Fuel

Fuel is a key operating cost and factor for our agricultural industry. We don’t just drive a car – or two – to and from work, school, extra-curricular events, dining and weekend trips; rather, we have numerous trucks, tractors, harvesting equipment (swathers, rakes, bale wagons, stackers), ATVs, etc. – that are the tools of our trade. They run on gas and farm fuel. So do our generators, water and diesel pumps, compressors, welders, and other tools we use every day.

It’s not that we like to buy stuff (these large end items: machinery and vehicles), they are necessities – especially across the vast rangelands, county roads, highways, fields, pastures, and allotments. Increasing fuel taxes and fees will devastate our farming and ranching bottom line – and agriculture is our primary industry. Frontier Oregon agriculture will bear an inequitable burden to fund this bill.

Please Consider Dropping This Bill.
Please Slow Down!

If You Are Intent On Passing This Bill
Please Adopt Major Amendments:

- 1) Exempt Eastern Oregon.
- 2) Exempt Agriculture.
- 3) Credit Counties (Continually) with their Carbon Sequestration
- 4) Focus on the Urban Areas and the Portland – Salem – Eugene Corridor
- 5) Make this A Revenue Neutral Bill for the East Side.

Thank you for gathering additional public input. This is a very important issue.

Sincerely yours,



Patty Dorroh
Harney County Commissioner
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