



BTN
OF OREGON

BTN of OREGON

Christmas Tree Mgt.
Planting & Culturing
Licensed & Bonded

7544 Jordan St. SE
Salem, OR 97317
503-363-6106

Since 1958

My name is Ben Stone a second-generation Christmas Tree Farmer from Salem, and I am here today in opposition to house bill 3044.

This bill threatens the lively hood of myself, and my family, as well as more than 50 full time employees.

The use of helicopters in our business is critical for the application of pesticides, and fertilizer. Without this very essential tool we would not be able to bring our crop to harvest. One might make the argument that these applications could be made on the ground. They cannot. The majority of our 2500-acre operation takes place in the foothills outside of Stayton and Sublimity, where the terrain is much too steep and rugged for either a wheeled or tracked vehicle to maneuver. Helicopters are the only solution.

I personally have spent many years working ground support, mixing and loading chemicals into the helicopter for pest control on our trees. I hire and work with probably the best aerial applicator in the state Mr. Terry Harchenko, owner and operator of Industrial Aviation in Salem. Mr. Harchenko is the ultimate example of "doing it by the book". Proper labeling, Environmental conditions, correct nozzle types and angles just to name a few are all factored before a job is even begun. If even one of these is not acceptable, we don't spray. A more cautious, and conscientious person I have never met, and this is what you want in a spray pilot. If no one has ever seen a field being sprayed by air, it is a thing of beauty, and I would encourage you to come join me at day break one morning, and be prepared to be impressed.

This bill adds so much additional record keeping, and adds so much exposure to scrutiny, I'm worried that Mr. Harchenko and his peers will say enough is enough and just hang it up. Maybe that's the goal here, I hope not because my family and many others who rely on aerial applicators need this service to keep our business alive.

Another part of this bill that concerns me is the DEQ's posting of applications. I know there are people out there who don't agree with farmers and foresters regarding the use of pesticides, however we have the right to farm and not be harassed. This potentially sets us up for a lot of harassment. There is also a proprietary issue that comes up. As nice of a bunch of people as the local Christmas tree growers are, they are still my competitors. I don't want to share my special blend of fertilizer, or the timing of a fungicide application with my entire industry. My brothers and I have work for years like our father before us to come up with the techniques and formulas that we have today that give us a competitive edge in a cut-throat market place. If this bill passes all those years of hard work and expense will be on public display for free. This isn't right!

I ask you to stop house bill 3044 and meet me in the field this spring time to see a man fly an aircraft to perfection.

Thank you,

Ben Stone


BTN of Oregon Inc.