

Dear Senators,

I am writing on behalf of farmers and Ranchers in Eastern Oregon who are currently in the middle of Calving season and are therefore too busy to be able to testify in Salem. The calving season in the John Day Valley has been especially hard this year. Not because of weather or disease, this difficulty this year has come from Crows. The birds have come in by the thousands and will attack fresh newborn calves before they even have a chance to stand for the first time. The crows will eat the still alive calves eyes, after which the newborn simply bleeds to death. At that point the Farmer can do nothing but clear away the now dead baby. The only tool available to these Farmers is to harass the crows and drive them away with gun fire. As you can imagine, it only take a short time for the crows to move in and damage the calf's delicate eyes, there is no time to run back to the house and unlock the safe. The Firearms must be kept in the feed-trucks, and tractors when the Farmers go out to the field. SB978 threatens to make these men and women violate the law simply to save the lives of their cattle. On top of that, any lawsuit that stems from a rifle or shotgun being stolen from their vehicle threatens to destroy a family business that has been operating in the state for in some cases hundreds of years and multiple generations. Farms that have been run by the farmers great great grandfather could be seized in court settlements because of the actions of a criminal that has victimized the farmer already.

Please do not destroy the Legacy of Eastern Oregon. You may not know what it feels like to hold a dying calf and watch as a life only a few hours old is snuffed out, but I do. I ask that you do not take away the tools we need to protect the lives of those around us. Even when those lives have 4 legs. Please stop 978 and any similar bill from moving forward.

Sincerely
Matthew Whitaker
Eastern Oregon Farmer/Rancher