



*Protecting Our Natural Heritage
From the Coast to the Cascades*

P.O. Box 5347 • Eugene, OR 97405 • (541) 741-3625 • www.landwatch.net

February 5, 2020

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem OR 97301

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO SB 1555 (NON-FARM DWELLINGS/RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS)

Committee Members:

Please say no to this proposal.

Have you noticed how common it is for people with connections to get a bill before a legislative committee when a court ruling does not go in their favor? Have you noticed how people come to you, elected officials charged with protecting the general public, to mitigate their personal disappoint and anger about laws that don't work for their personal situation?

I have noticed, with despair. This happens because it works. Legislators and members of committees are, sadly, more than willing to punch holes in laws meant to protect our natural resources and our farm and forest-based economy. There is no public benefit that results from punching holes in laws that also provide a substantial tax benefit to landowners; this Legislature has not touched or asked about the integrity of the property tax deferral program in decades, yet continues to allow more and more uses on property tax deferred resource lands.

If you must pass special interest bills such as SB 1555, please name them after the person the bill is for, limit the bill to that one person, and require a pay back of deferred taxes, with interest. There is no statewide problem that this proposal solves, and the individual for whom the bill was written should be expected to manage their disappointment without imposing their will on the rest of the state, the way Jesus did, in a manner fitting for the church and clergy. If the individual for whom this bill was written wanted to live in a house on

farmland, they should have purchased property with an existing house, rather than property with an existing church. It is not the legislatures job to derail the state's land use laws because of the choice of one individual that didn't work out the way that individual planned.

This proposed bill enables an entirely new concept on property tax deferred farm land – that protection of farm land for farm uses doesn't matter if it conflicts with a buyers intent and if that buyer can convince a county planner they are a religious official . If you allow this new nonfarm use outright, the lobbyists who roam your hallways and committee meetings will be back for more and more and more.

I always thought your elected duty was to the people of Oregon. It certainly is not your duty to mitigate individual property owners disappointing choices, or to overturn a significant component of the land use statutes, by committee. And honestly, how much familiarity with the EFU statutes does this committee have.

Finally, does the state of Oregon really want county planners, appointed planning commissioners, and elected county Commissioners interpreting the definition of "religious official"? I am an official card-carrying member of the Church of Elvis, do I qualify as a religious official? I'm thinking I might.

Please say no to this proposal.

Thank you.

Hope Vaccher
PO Box 5347
Eugene 97405