

I'm writing to you today to encourage you to vote NO on HB 2357 which defunds OFRI.

I am an Oregonian whose family is supported by Timber dollars and I am deeply concerned about these bills.

Now is the worst possible time for a new timber tax. Rural communities cannot afford another tax. Timber jobs and businesses are the economic backbone of rural Oregon.

The Timber industry provides over 60,000 family wage jobs in Oregon, mostly in rural communities. In 2020, these communities have endured massive layoffs and the worst wildfires in Oregon history and are struggling to recover and rebuild.

A new tax, increased taxes and compounding taxes on timber will eliminate jobs and businesses in rural communities that are already suffering multiple extreme hardships.

Oregonians oppose new taxes and regulations on businesses struggling to recover from the economic devastation of the pandemic. Our focus should remain on restoring hundreds of thousands of acres of burned forests back to healthy, thriving forests that mitigate risks of future fires, protect water quality, and capture and store carbon – NOT taxing the very people doing that work.

Keeping forests as forests is in the best interest of all Oregonians, and our current tax and land use systems work together to encourage forestland is maintained in Oregon and not lost to conversion like has happened in our neighboring states. Since 1907, Oregon has maintained 94% of its forestland area, whereas Washington and California have lost over 15% of their forestland to development. Reinstating a severance tax encourages conversion of forestland to other uses (residential, industrial, agricultural) that do not provide environmental benefits like carbon capture and storage, wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation.

Exempting small tract timberland owners (25,000 acres or less) from severance taxes, not only does it take money that is used for managing and keeping their timberland healthy it increases the likelihood of forced sales. REITS can pick these small tracts up for pennies on the dollar or IRBAN SPRAWL will gladly step in and start building. Either way is not good for Oregon or Oregon's forests.

Severance taxes are for "severed resources" like coal and crude oil, not a crop that is planted and cultivated over time. State law requires harvested timber be replanted – on average four trees are planted for every one that is harvested.

I urge you to please vote no on these detrimental bills. Piling on new taxes to the communities devastated by the wildfires who are trying to recover and do restoration work won't bring our forests back. We need to focus on returning our forests to health.

Thank you for your time and attention,