

HB 2379

I oppose HB 2379 on the grounds that it does not solve any current problem but does take away landowner rights and greatly increases taxes. I don't believe adding more money and transferring another task to ODF will make it any more efficient. When money goes into ODF to manage certain tasks, decisions are mandated by the politics of the moment. Also, giving 25% to the general fund for each county with no specific guidelines on spending is irresponsible.

As with any commodity there is risk involved! Timber growers are essentially gamblers. We cannot control the price of lumber at the mill, punitive legislation in Salem, the weather, and the ability to contract loggers, haulers, and other necessary workers during a busy season.

Doing away with the current Harvest Tax and replacing it with a 5% severance tax will increase my taxes by a factor of 5 to 6 times. Here's why I find this is punitive:

In 2019 I harvested about 9 acres of timber. Prices were about \$600 per thousand board feet. Yes, I made money, but after the trees were hauled away (and the loggers and truckers paid) came the "other" expenses not usually accounted for by others. I paid to have the roads re-rocked, the debris piled, the burn fees, the site preparation spray, the purchase of seedlings and the planting of said seedlings, installing expensive culverts in hitherto unseen streamlets, gas for the 40 minute trip to the tree farm, replacement boots and rainwear as well as the harvest tax and the severance tax. This all added up to tens of thousands of dollars, plus untold hours of time and labor on my part.

And then came this year's Valentine's Day ice storm which downed all power lines, blew down immature trees, and broke out the tops of mature 70 year old trees along the Kings Valley Highway 223. Now my tree farm looks like a war zone. Formerly beautiful tall trees have no tops and will have to be removed leaving the few remaining trees vulnerable to wind throw. The younger cohort acres have been flattened to the ground unable to withstand the 3 inch ice coating on them. We are attempting to tie some of them up but others will have to be cut down as their trunks are completely broken in half. Another expense will be hiring help with these chores if I can find workers.

As for eliminating OFRI, my commodity commission, are you also eliminating the wheat commission, the blueberry commission, etc., etc., etc.? We fund OFRI and no money comes from the General fund. I have been very impressed by the efforts of OFRI to educate school children on tours, educate tree farmers with up-to-date manuals, and educate the urban public with TV presentations on forestry practices. Urbanites have really lost any connection to agriculture of any kind. Sure, they may pick blueberries or buy lumber, but they have no real idea of the effort it takes to bring product to market. I was particularly impressed by OFRI's use of focus groups to help them hone their presentations, which are so necessary for all the new arrivals to Oregon.

Now we're faced with the quintupling of our taxes along with other unnecessary redistributions of money. And be aware, OFRI is not broken and doesn't need "fixing."

Mother Nature is working hard to destroy my timber crop. I don't see any reason she needs extra help from HB 23792.

Keeping forests as forests is a stated Oregon goal. Defeating this bill would be a great start.