

SB 70 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Laura Kentnesse

Meeting Dates: 6/22, 6/23

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Amends the definition of "high-value farmland" for residential rezoning of lands within the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region (Border Region) to allow for rezoning within the boundaries of an irrigation district, drainage district, water improvement district, water control district, or related corporation, and within a portion of the Snake River Valley viticultural area. Requires that the rezoned lands are within a rural fire protection district, comply with applicable fire prevention code requirements, and are not within an area designated as a 100-year floodplain on a current Federal Emergency Management Agency map. Changes county authority to "partition" to county authority to "divide" lands zoned for exclusive farm use within the Border Region, provided that certain conditions are met.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2017, the Legislative Assembly created the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region (Border Region) and established the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board (Board) through the enactment of House Bill 2012. The Border Region is defined in rule as the area within 20 miles of the Oregon border with Idaho, which includes the cities of Ontario, Vale, and Nyssa. The Board is charged with recommending policies and strategies to the Legislative Assembly for promoting workforce and economic growth in the Border Region. The Board is also tasked with identifying specific laws, rules, and regulations that place workforce or economic development efforts in the Border Region at a competitive disadvantage compared to similar efforts in the border region of Idaho.

In 2021, the Board urged the legislature to pass Senate Bill 16 as a means to increase rural residential housing options in the Border Region in response to significant residential growth in Idaho. The Legislative Assembly enacted the bill, which authorizes counties to partition and rezone up to 200 acres of lands within the Border Region from exclusive farm use to residential use, provided that the rezoned lands are not high-value farmland and other specified requirements are met.

Senate Bill 70 A would amend the definition of "high-value farmland" for residential rezoning of certain lands within Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region, and would require that the rezoned lands are located within a rural fire protection district, comply with applicable fire prevention code requirements, and are not located within a designated 100-year floodplain.