

Testimony for SB985
April 11, 2025
John Williams

Co-chairs Leiber and Sanchez, and members of the committee, I am John Williams, rancher from Wallowa County and I am eastern Oregon co-chair of the wolf committee for the Oregon Cattleman's Association. I support the passage of SB985.

In 2012, ODA established and implemented a Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance grant program (ORS 610.150) to assist livestock producers with costs associated with wolf depredation and non-lethal control measures.

SB985 funds the wolf compensation program for the coming biennium. The senate has passed SB777 that updates the wolf compensation program and it currently is in the house. It is our hope that it will be successful. Regardless of the outcome of that bill, the wolf compensation program in the state of Oregon needs to be funded.

Last year, in 2024, there were approximately 133 confirmed or probable wolf kills or injuries. This was up 37% from the previous year. There were more ranchers dealing with more wolves in more places in Oregon last year and we believe this trend will continue into the future.

In northeast Oregon the wolf population has reached population saturation where wolves have filled up the landscape and are moving ever closer to the communities in the valleys. As this occurs, we will see depredations continue to increase.

In the western $\frac{3}{4}$ of the state the wolves are still protected under the federal endangered species act and cannot be killed when they attack rancher's livestock. In that part of the state, the only tools ranchers have are non-lethal activities and compensation when attacks occur. This makes the compensation program even more important.

I am asking your support SB985 to fund the wolf compensation program for the coming biennium.