

Submitter: Robert Emmons
On Behalf Of: LandWatch Lane County
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Submitter: Robert Emmons

On Behalf Of: LandWatch Lane County

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB 4153

Co-chairs Helm and Owens and members of the Committee:

LandWatch Lane County, the non-profit that I head, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. As a group dedicated to the protection of Oregon's rural lands, we strongly oppose HB 4153.

Land use issues are complex and their legislation can be deceptive and confusing, even to those of us who work routinely with land use law. Therefore, any land use bills introduced in this short session will certainly intend to erode or eradicate protections for farm and forest land and benefit from a smoke screen of misinformation and disinformation that will count on inadequate scrutiny.

HB 4153 was crafted by Oregon Property Owners Association (OPOA), formerly Oregonians in Action, and its lobbyist, Dave Hunnicutt, who have for decades been doing everything in their power to eliminate land use regulation and commercialize Oregon's farm and forest lands. State law already allows farm stands, wineries, agri-tourism and other commercial and recreational events, at an appropriate scale in which farming is the predominant use, and these activities are an important bridge from farm practices and products to consumers. Farmers and their customers have been mutually benefitting from this relationship for many decades.

HB 4153 would require counties to allow farm stores (instead of farm stands) of up to 10,000 sq. ft. offering commercial style shopping and dining and large events, such as concerts and weddings, in EFU zones. The bill offers no consideration of impacts on adjacent farmland or the economic or real estate value of land zoned for farming. The radical increase in the scale of structure and activities permitted by this bill will put the emphasis on them, shrink the amount of farmland available for farming, and make what remains unaffordable to real farmers. This should be no surprise, as HB 4153 has nothing to say about keeping agriculture the primary use in EFU zones.

Hunnicutt and his self-interested, anti-government cohort have for far too long negatively impacted land use protections in this state, protections that polling has consistently shown the vast majority of Oregonians desire. Former (Republican) Governor Tom McCall devoted his life to protecting the farms and forests, the natural areas and open spaces, the rivers and creeks and streams of a state he had grown to love. And I had the good fortune to be here when he was in the capitol and SB 100 was born. As someone coming from a state in which land use protections were unheard-of, I was both astonished and profoundly grateful.

Please honor McCall's legacy by letting this special interest, unnecessary and untimely bill die in committee.

Thank you.

Robert Emmons, President
LandWatch Lane County