

Dear Senators-

We understand that you will hold a work session on SB 432 and SB 644 today. I want you to know that we are strongly opposed to both of these attacks on our unique and valuable land use laws.

SB 432

- **There is no evidence that there is a lack of land available for development in Eastern Oregon.** The bill is based on the false premise that making more land available for development would automatically mean greater economic development for Eastern Oregon. This is simply not true. Instead, it would make it easier for rangeland to be divided and developed, making agricultural jobs disappear. In fact, there is plenty of cheaply priced land in these counties right now that is zoned for industrial, commercial and residential use.
- **Agriculture is the economic engine of these counties.** Oregon's land use system, including the property tax benefits we give to working lands, helps support the viability of farming, the largest industry in terms of economic output in all these rural counties. Oregon's agricultural economy is one of the strongest in the country, due in part because of our statewide planning goals that protect agricultural lands and the regulations that make it easier to farm. #1 agricultural product in Oregon is cattle and calves, which are largely produced in eastern Oregon. Of Oregon's top 20 agricultural products, many are grown primarily in eastern Oregon, including hay, wheat, potatoes, onions, and mint. SB 432 puts at risk the land base needed for the leading industry in these counties
- **Our land use system helps rural local governments stay solvent.** One of the key tenets of Oregon's land use goals is to encourage compact, cost-efficient development. Dispersed development is much more expensive for cash-strapped local governments which are forced to maintain far-flung infrastructure (roads, water and sewer lines) and services (fire, police and schools).
- **Local communities already have a lot of control over their land use rules.** Each local government already customizes their Comprehensive Plan to their local community and its needs and they already have the ability to amend their plans as their needs change. Just like you'd expect, Malheur County's rules are very different from Multnomah's. Each county already customizes land use to their own situation.
- **There are more effective solutions for growing and diversifying the eastern Oregon economy.** Why doesn't the legislature invest in value-added production; research & development of new products; growing local businesses related to the region's assets, such as recreation and tourism; and investing in diverse types of infrastructure, including roads, high-speed internet service, and improved air access? Let's try something that really will lead to economic development.

SB 644

- **Eastern Oregon's largest industry, agriculture, could be undermined with no opportunity for counties to limit or mitigate the impacts of mining on surrounding farmers and ranching operations.** SB 644 would allow mining on Eastern Oregon farmland with NO land use review at all and no permit. This effectively turns a farmland zone into a farmland and mining zone.

- **Existing protections of farmland in eastern Oregon should not be traded away for the suction dredge bill.** Eastern Oregon farming should be protected consistent with Statewide Land Use Goal 3.
- **Mining can be compatible with farming and ranching, but sometimes it is not.** That is why the current law protects farmland for farming but allows mining as a Conditional Use on farmland. It allows local governments to make common-sense, context sensitive decisions that protect mine neighbors not just mine operators.

These bills are bad for Oregon and we urge you to vote NO.

Thank you for your consideration,
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