

Committee members,

My name is Susan Topham and I am the third generation to live and work on our families cattle ranch in the Sprague River valley of Klamath County. I was hoping that one of our family members would be able to make the 250 mile trip to Salem to personally testify, but cold and flu season, along with running a family ranch at the start of calving season has other ideas for us.

I am writing in support of the Ratepayer Protection Act (SB 1552). This important bill will ensure that irrigated agriculture can continue in Oregon. Currently, even though less than 10% of our ranch is irrigated, power to irrigate 10% of our ranch is far and away the biggest expense that our ranch has. Unlike our other expenses, power rates climb precipitously every single year. This is mostly due to the fact that the power company is a government enabled monopoly. If our fuel becomes too expensive, we can always go to another fuel company and find a better price. Capitalism at work. However, when our power bill rises 50% every year for eight years in a row, we have no option other than Pacific Power. Because Pacific Power is a government enabled monopoly, it needs to also be a government regulated monopoly in order to protect power users. This bill is a great starting point in slowing down the outrageous rates being charged by power companies in Oregon. Currently, power rates are the biggest issue facing agriculture in our area, and we are where all the water wars are happening! We lease many pastures around the county, and it has gotten to the point where most people won't irrigate their places anymore because they can't grow enough crops to pay the power bill, let alone make a profit. Yet, the power company gets bigger and shareholders get richer and richer. I am not against the power company making a profit, but bankrupting our rural communities is going too far!

I also greatly approve of returning the money that the power company has taken from ratepayers for dam removal. Dam removal makes no sense. Let's destroy our ability to produce power and then power rates will go down??? How does that make sense? Fish ladders can work and are an appropriate way of dealing with the dams on the Klamath River.

Please pass this important bill and allow small farms and ranches to survive another year growing healthy and nutritious food for our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susan Topham

Sprague River, Oregon