

Statement of the Oregon Land And Water Alliance (OLAWA) in opposition to SB 70.

My name is Paul Lipscomb, and I live in the Cloverdale area outside of Sisters in Central Oregon. I am the Vice President of OLAWA, the Oregon Land And Water Alliance. The Oregon Land And Water Alliance is a 501c3 organization, and its purpose is to educate the public to promote and protect the Rule of Law on all local issues relating to land and water use as well as fish and wildlife.

We oppose Senate Bill 70, and ask you to do likewise.

Senate Bill 70 is a follow up to a similar bill, SB 16, which was passed during the 2021 regular session. That earlier bill was a compromise measure which opened up farmland to small acreage residential housing within the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region, but not to lands within irrigation districts. SB 70 would now permit farmlands within irrigation districts to be developed as well.

With the enactment of SB 16 in 2021, the land development camel got its nose under the protective tent of land use restrictions on farm lands in Oregon, and specifically, on farmland in the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development region. With this proposed new legislation the land development camel seeks to creep further under Oregon's protective farmland development restrictions by also allowing small acreage housing developments on farmland even within irrigation districts.

If approved, this change would be fundamentally in conflict with our pioneering land use planning system and with its goal of protecting Oregon's most valuable farmlands, particularly those within irrigation districts.

Eastern Oregon, like the rest of this great state, needs more affordable housing within our urban growth boundaries where affordable housing can be done both economically and in proximity to the places where our citizens work, shop, and attend schools and churches. But it does not need more small acreage ranchettes scattered amongst irrigated farmlands where basic urban support systems are not available.

There is, of course, absolutely no evidence that the shortage of affordable housing is due to a lack of small acreage agricultural lands zoned for residential use. Single family small acreage agricultural lots would simply be far too expensive to support any form of affordable housing. In practice, if this bill were to pass, it would only allow more developers to profit by converting high value farmland into high value residential land. It would do nothing to ameliorate the shortage of affordable housing.

In short, this is an unnecessary bill which will do more harm than good in eastern Oregon, and it would also establish a very dangerous precedent for allowing the conversion of farmland within irrigation districts into small acreage rural homesites throughout the balance of Oregon as well. And there is certainly no good reason for Oregon to allow more of its high value farmland to be irreplaceably lost to “sagebrush subdivisions.”

Please vote NO on SB 70!

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns with this bill.

Paul Lipscomb, Vice President of OLAWA

PO Box 579,

Sisters, OR 97759

judgelipscomb@gmail.com