

NO on HB 2456 A: Protect Oregon's Farmland



Detrimental to agriculture.

- HB 2456 A would waive Oregon's land use laws to allow houses – not related to farming – to be built on exclusive farm use lands in the “eastern Oregon border region,” which includes the Malheur County cities of Ontario, Vale, and Nyssa, the areas of Willow Creek and Brogan, and the farm and ranch lands in between.
- HB 2456 A would allow the new homes on lots or parcels of 2 or more acres, with a maximum of 200 acres potentially rezoned. That means as many as 100 new homes on EFU land would be allowed.
- Agriculture is the economic engine of Malheur County. The county is always in the top 5 farm counties in the state, and is a leader in dairy, beef, and onions.
- Wildfire maps show areas of “very high” and “high” risk right outside of Ontario and Vale that are zoned EFU.
- Farm land rezoned under HB 2456 A would be allowed to keep its farm tax assessment for 5 years, or until a dwelling occupancy permit is issued. In addition, a “taxpayer who sells” the house would be eligible for a tax credit of up to \$5000 if the buyer “intends” it to be their “primary residence.” This seems both unenforceable and unfair. It would mean Oregonians are subsidizing housing on EFU land that is not for a farmer, rancher, or farm workers.

Unnecessary.

In 2008, Ontario designated approximately 2200 acres as an urban reserve around the existing urban growth boundary, to accommodate future growth. As of 2017, approximately 1500 acres remained in the urban reserve; and 700 acres have been added to the urban growth boundary. The Ontario UGB and urban reserve have plenty of land for this purpose.

A common misconception is that this bill will provide an economic boost to the county. However, studies show that residential development does not pay the costs accrued by local governments to service new homes. Greater economic return would come from protecting and enhancing the local economic driver – agriculture. Oregon should be protecting our capacity to produce food and fiber, especially in view of global trends.

Unfair.

HB 2456 A provides unfair incentives to bypass thoughtful planning for the region. New residential lot owners would receive the farm tax assessment. And the state would further forgo tax revenues and incentivize conflict with agriculture in EFU zoned land by awarding a \$5000 tax credit for each new house built. **Oregon should not subsidize neighbor conflict that undercuts the state's second largest economic driver – agriculture.**

HB 2456 A is based on the counter-productive notion that if higher-end homes are allowed on EFU land, it will spur economic growth in the region. **HB 2456 A will, instead, undermine both Malheur County's very healthy agricultural industry, and the state's land use system.**

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