



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Chair and colleagues – I’ve heard a lot from folks in the industry about this bill. I’ve heard that aerial spraying is necessary to forestry, despite the fact that the federal government doesn’t allow it. I’ve heard that this is just city slickers imposing their will on rural residents. Well, I didn’t grow up in the city. I grew up on Horton Road, in Triangle Lake, in the Coast Range. I lived near several boys my age. Since there was obviously no public water system, wells were expensive, and springs on the sides of the Valley abundant, most of our parents built little water systems that caught water from surface streams for household use.

My neighborhood’s first experience with aerial spraying was when the ridge behind the Raya residence was sprayed after a clear cut. My friend Ben and his parents were picketing in front of their house in a futile effort to protest the spraying. After spraying the ridge, the helicopter saw them, turned toward their house and deliberately sprayed their property. Every living thing died, other than Ben and his family, who were lucky just to get ill. Surely this is the exception, right? Yet in 2015, we saw video evidence of Applebee Aviation spraying one their own workers with atrazine. They were fined and suspended but continued to fly despite the suspension. It wasn’t a new thing for them – they’ve over-sprayed atrazine into a steelhead creek the year before. When they inspected Applebee, ODA found 16 spray violations, including 4 of gross negligence, in a single year. The federal government has required us to prevent spraying in small streams in the Coast Range since 1998, yet we still do it, losing federal money and poisoning small communities.

My friend Ben was fortunate not to get cancer. Others were not so fortunate. You see, just at the junction of High Pass and Horton Road, several boys lived with their families, including my friends Hunter Meitle and Ryan Hooper. Their spring was sprayed. Hunter, Jason Schell, and Chris Tatum all drank from the spring died from cancer within two years. Two pregnant women, Nancy O’Ryan and Sue Wuorinen, miscarried. My best friend Ryan got lucky. He didn’t get his cancer until his 40s.

I was fortunate. My dad was an organic farmer. So, when they clear cut the woods above our spring, he threatened to sue the company if they sprayed and contaminated our farm. They backed down and did it by hand, saving the spring. There are alternatives that are safer and provide more jobs. They just cost more money. It’s cheaper to poison communities to reduce costs.


I wish that was the end of the story, but spraying continued in my hometown. 8 years ago, samples from people living in Triangle Lake thereafter showed elevated levels of atrazine, another forestry herbicide and an endocrine disruptor. Yet we continue to spray above water sources for entire cities.

So, when the opponents say their industry is safe, I point to the evidence – the evidence in our children’s bodies. When they say aerial spraying is harmless, I point to Hunter Meitle, Jason



Schell, Chris Tatum and Ryan Hooper. I point to the pregnancies lost. When they say it is precise, I would ask if they've ever rappelled out of a helicopter to see for themselves. I have, in the Army. I'll tell you that there's nothing precise about what happens under a helicopter.

I have no objection to responsible forestry. I believe that we can manage our state forests responsibly for many goals, including a sustainable harvest. However, we should not pretend that we can benefit the state by poisoning it. I hope you will forward the bill with a do pass recommendation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randall L. White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".