

Submitter: Mike Higgins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, and Water

Measure: HB4127

As a nearly-lifelong resident of northeast Oregon, and having spent most of my growing-up years in Hereford, I've developed some strong opinions about the entire cattle business and the innumerable ways that business has resulted in irreparable damage to our planet. Further support of/encouraging of the cattle industry by offering one more open-ended prop-up, financed by the taxpayers of Oregon, makes absolutely no sense. Although most of the farmers/ranchers I've known over the last 70+ years are honest, hardworking, ethical folks, this compensation program leaves the door wide open for abuse by the few unscrupulous operators that would welcome the opportunity to further take advantage of us taxpayers.

- Another objection I have to this proposal has to do with the unfair and unjustified treatment the cattle industry receives from government agencies. I owned and operated my insurance business for 40+ years and was never offered nor received financial assistance from the State of Oregon. There were no programs available that would have propped me up in the event of difficult financial times my insurance business encountered. Yet, folks in the cattle industry enjoy all kinds of benefits for any financial difficulties they may encounter:

1. They're paying far less than market rates for the grazing permits that allows them to graze their cows on public lands. In order to attain a break-even point, we'd have to charge \$15-\$20 per AUM on our pastureland while the going rate per AUM on public lands was around \$2/AUM. the last time I checked;
2. In addition, the holders of grazing permits aren't responsible for maintaining any of the fences required to keep their cows from trespassing on private property and aren't liable for any damage their cows might cause on those private lands;
3. Cattle raisers are similarly never held responsible for the continuing - and worsening - severe environmental destruction caused by their cows.

And now us taxpayers are being asked to create an even larger pot of gold for them to dip into to compensate them for their "wolf losses", with very little safeguards or oversight to make sure they don't cheat?