



Representative Bobby Levy

Serving Umatilla, Union & Wallowa Counties

Hello Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and members of the committee,

For the Record I am Representative Bobby Levy from House District 58 and I am here to testify against Senate Bill 199.

As a former Chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, I am intimately familiar with this agency's role and its potential to manage Oregon's natural resources. I am just as familiar with the potential for abuse if this agency's priorities are driven by political agendas. SB 199 is just that – urban politics foisted on rural Oregonians without consideration of the actual effects of legislation.

This bill seeks to ban the protection of Oregon's agriculture industry from predators listed under ORS 610.002: coyotes, rabbits, rodents and certain birds. By its very definition, predatory animals may be destructive to agricultural crops, products, and activities.

If the legislature is successful in giving this regulatory authority to ODFW, the Commission will establish rules that will make predatory animal management on agricultural operations increasingly difficult and more costly, if not impossible. This bill takes away landowner control over predators (like coyotes) who come in under the darkness of night in packs. They regularly surround our sheep pasture trying to lure the guardian dogs out of the pasture to attack them and then get to my sheep. Most farmers do not have guardian dogs to protect their animals.

This bill also takes away our ability to control gophers that destroy our alfalfa or grass seed. Not to mention the ability to control rats and mice that by nature live in those very fields and carry all sorts of diseases that are known to be dangerous to humans as well as can get into homes and food production facilities, which are numerous on my side of the state.

ODFW is already having problems with the animals they have control over, adding this to their plate will be a disaster. ODFW already has an over abundant elk and deer population that is ruining alfalfa, spring and winter wheat fields as well as tearing down haystacks, costing the ranching community thousands of dollars and additional time to replant crops destroyed by these herds, not to mention the additional cost burden put on the ranchers to purchase additional hay to make it through the winter months. ODFW is not set up to take over another set of animals to control, nor will they have the money to do so.

This bill places unrealistic regulations on farmers and ranchers and creates uncertainty for landowners as they will have no idea what ODFW is doing regulatorily. This bill doesn't let us be competitive with other states and will not keep farmers on the land. It is unnecessary as

ODA already does this and I might add, does it very well. This bill continues to march us towards poor rural communities and will increase rural poverty. What problems are we trying to fix by this bill?

The need to vote against SB 199 should be self-evident. The opposition of the farmers who will be affected is universal and ranges across the State. Urban legislators should not spend their time taking away the right of the rural farmers and ranchers who feed them from protecting their workers, livestock, and livelihoods.

I urge you to let this bill die.

Best,
Rep. Bobby Levy, HD 58

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.