

Submitter: Barbara Kahl

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency  
Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB641

SB641 should be passed with bipartisan acceptance.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the growing trend of foreign ownership of American land, particularly here in Oregon, and the economic consequences it poses for our state and nation. Currently, a Chinese billionaire is now the second biggest foreign owner of U.S. land, owning 198,000 acres of timberland right here in Oregon. The billionaire, Chen Tianqiao, is the founder of an online gaming company.

While international investment can bring benefits, the unchecked acquisition of U.S. farmland, forests, and real estate by foreign entities threatens Oregon's economic independence, local livelihoods, and long-term prosperity.

Oregon's economy relies heavily on its natural resources—agriculture, timber, and ranching form the backbone of rural communities like mine. When foreign corporations or governments purchase large swaths of our land, they often prioritize profit over the well-being of local workers and ecosystems. Take, for example, the fertile Willamette Valley, where family farms have thrived for generations. If these lands fall into foreign hands, we risk losing control over food production and pricing, leaving Oregonians vulnerable to decisions made half a world away.

The numbers paint a worrying picture. Nationwide, foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land has surged in recent years, and Oregon is not immune. Just look at the 2019 sale of nearly 10,000 acres of Oregon timberland to a foreign investment firm. That's not just land—it's jobs, tax revenue, and economic stability walking out the door. When foreign owners extract resources or lease land back to us at inflated rates, the profits flow overseas instead of staying in our communities to support schools, infrastructure, or small businesses.

Economically, this trend undermines our autonomy. Oregonians shouldn't have to compete with foreign billionaires or state-backed entities for the right to own and work our own soil. Rising land prices driven by outside speculation make it harder for young farmers or ranchers to get a foothold, choking the next generation of agricultural stewards. And in a state where rural economies are already stretched thin, handing over land to absentee owners could mean fewer local jobs and a weaker tax base—hurting everyone from loggers to shopkeepers.

Oregon's land is a finite resource, and once it's gone, we can't get it back. I urge our

leaders to enact SB641 on foreign ownership. States like Iowa have already set a precedent with tough laws protecting their farmland; Oregon should follow suit before it's too late.

Let's keep Oregon's land in Oregonian hands, where it can sustain our economy and our way of life for generations to come. Foreign trade should never be confused with foreign surrender and sale of our land.

Sincerely,  
Dr Barbara J Kahl DVM