

Submitter: Tate Justesen
On Behalf Of: self and family
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1034

(2nd written testimony submission in opposition to SB 1034)

Dear Chair, Vice-Chairs, and members of the Committee:

My family has been farming/ranching/stewarding land in Sherman County, Oregon for five (5) generations, going on the 6th (which is being raised on the ranch now).

Our dryland (that is, no irrigation) farming/ranching operation averages around 8-10 inches of precipitation annually. The farm crop we are limited to is soft white winter wheat, farmed on a summer fallow basis (that is, one crop every two years due to lack of moisture in the soil).

The one crop that can be farmed on our land is subject to the vagaries of weather, international conflict, international weather/crop conditions, international trade conflicts, tariffs (or threats thereof), stagnation/decline of commodity price, and skyrocketing costs/inputs of raising the crop. Recent turmoil in the United States government also leads to much uncertainty over our ability to rely on long-standing conservation contracts, crop insurance coverage, and crop subsidies to assist in cushioning the previously stated uncertainties associated with farming in North Central Oregon.

Farm land in Central Oregon is NOT the same as agriculture/farm land in the Western (Willamette Valley) part of Oregon or other parts of Oregon, and it should not be treated the same. The productivity of our North Central Oregon farm land is not the same as the Western side of Oregon (Willamette Valley), our precipitation is not the same, and our ability to diversify our income stream from agriculture is NOT the same as those in other parts of Oregon. The representative from the Oregon Farm Bureau seems to lump all Oregon farm land into the same category indiscriminately and that is neither fair nor accurate.

Farm land in Sherman County, Oregon, is uniquely suited to siting of large alternative energy projects due to proximity to existing energy transmission infrastructure, number of annual sunny days, the terrain, and the isolated location far away from population centers.

Potential for diversification of our income base and ability to expand income on our family farm operation is crucial to the survival of our family farming operation, and others.

I OPPOSE SB 1034.

We oppose SB 1034 because it represents yet another procedural administrative hurdle and complication in alternative energy siting.

We oppose SB 1034 because it would inject even more statewide capricious/uncertain decision making into the energy project siting process. The process does not need more complication. The process does not need to be more burdensome - SB 1034 would create more burden and more complication.

We oppose SB 1034 because it brands our ag/farm land the same as that in other parts of Oregon - that is simply not a fair nor accurate comparison. Our farm land is different and we should not have even more restrictions on the use of our land dictated to us on the issue of alternative energy siting.

We are concerned that 3rd parties want to tell us that because we have agricultural land we shouldn't be allowed to site energy projects on our land. No one is forcing us to have energy development on our land. We, as long-time farmers/ag land owners, have determined that the best use of our land may be energy production and we should be allowed to pursue that option.

Thank you for considering my testimony