

Submitter: Gary Young
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1154

****Testimony Opposing SB 1154****

To: Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly

Subject: Opposition to SB 1154 - Water Rights and Property Regulations

Dear Esteemed Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 1154, particularly in light of the recently introduced amendment. This bill poses a significant threat to the property rights and water usage of Oregonians, particularly those who own or utilize water wells and undeveloped land.

First and foremost, the provisions within this bill infringe upon our fundamental property rights. It grants counties the authority to prohibit the development of new residential and accessory dwellings unless they are connected to urban water supply services or a community water well. This effectively undermines the rights of landowners to utilize their property as they see fit, restricting potential development and limiting the ability to build homes and accessory units that are crucial for accommodating families and local populations.

Moreover, the bill's stipulations regarding water rights are alarming. It mandates the Oregon Water Resources Department to enforce the abandonment, alteration, or resealing of wells due to the commingling of water, without any financial assistance provided to landowners. The costs of abandoning a well and drilling a new one can exceed thousands of dollars, placing an unreasonable burden on those affected. This is an extraordinary financial strain on rural Oregonians who rely on these water sources for their livelihoods and daily needs.

The bill also opens the door for increased government intrusion into private property. The provision allowing the Department of Environmental Quality to inspect private sewage systems raises serious concerns about privacy and property rights. The potential for unannounced inspections based on a declaration of a groundwater quality management area is invasive and unwarranted.

Furthermore, the bill's vague language regarding "groundwater quality concern areas" poses a slippery slope risk. It could easily lead to the entire state being

designated as such an area, subjecting all well owners and users to the stringent regulations outlined in this legislation. This is an unacceptable overreach that threatens the livelihoods of countless citizens.

The fact that this bill spans 86 pages and encompasses a multitude of complex issues related to water, septic systems, and property rights makes it difficult for the average citizen to fully comprehend its implications. This complexity is concerning, as it obscures the potential consequences of the legislation.

In closing, I urge you to consider the far-reaching implications of SB 1154 on the lives and rights of Oregonians. The bill not only threatens our access to water and property rights but also sets a dangerous precedent for government overreach. I implore you to stand with your constituents and reject this legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.