

Submitter: D Torres

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

Chair & Committee Members,

I OPPOSE HB 3372.

This proposal directs the Water Resources Department (WRD) to conduct a study on exempt uses of water. It may sound well-intentioned to evaluate existing exemptions, but such a study could result in unnecessary bureaucratic expansion and increased government intervention without providing tangible benefits.

We already have systems in place to manage water rights, including rules for allocating and monitoring water use. The WRD already has authority to review water use, so a study specifically focused on exempt uses seems redundant. Instead of directing resources towards additional studies, it would be more productive to ensure that current regulations are effectively implemented and enforced. Or should we expect an Amendment?

One of the most concerning aspects of this proposal is the potential for it to lead to increased regulatory burden for small businesses, farmers, and local communities that rely on exempt uses of water. Certain small-scale agricultural operations, domestic wells, and other exempt water uses may face new scrutiny and requirements, which could add significant complexity and costs to their operations.

These users already face a host of challenges, from drought conditions to rising water costs, and imposing additional regulations or restrictions could further undermine their ability to operate effectively. A study into exempt uses, particularly without a clear framework for how the results will be used, risks creating a situation where businesses and individuals are forced to navigate more red tape and uncertainty.

The study could serve as a precursor to future changes in the law that may lead to new restrictions on exempt water uses. By collecting data and reviewing exemptions, the government could create a path for future regulations that could impact domestic water usage, agricultural practices, or other exempt uses.

Agricultural producers who rely on exempt uses for irrigation may find themselves subject to increased oversight or restrictions if this study leads to the imposition of new rules. This could further impact the livelihoods of farmers who are already

struggling to deal with drought and the increasing demand for water resources. It is critical to recognize the potential negative impacts on food production and rural communities if this study leads to overregulation.

As it stands, water is a critical resource for many sectors of the economy, including agriculture, forestry, and small businesses. Restricting exempt uses or imposing additional fees or permits could increase operational costs, potentially driving up prices for consumers and creating economic hardship for industries that rely on water.

Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities are already facing challenging economic conditions. Adding further restrictions or regulations to exempt water uses could hurt their ability to remain competitive and sustainable. Consideration needs to be given to the economic reality that these sectors contribute significantly to Oregon's economy, and any additional regulatory burden could reduce economic growth in both rural and urban areas.

Rather than directing the WRD to study exempt water uses, we should focus on concrete solutions to address any underlying water challenges facing Oregon. Rather than engaging in a study that may lead to further regulatory burdens, we should prioritize actionable policies that address the needs of all water users, from farmers to municipalities.

I OPPOSE this bill because this study could lead to unnecessary bureaucracy, increased regulatory burdens, and unintended economic consequences for Oregon's businesses, farmers, and rural communities.