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

Oregon Senate Bill 1154 represents an unparalleled overreach by the state government, threatening the fundamental rights of property owners and undermining the principles of individual liberty that Oregonians hold dear. While the bill's proponents may argue it serves a public good—perhaps tied to water management or environmental protection—the measures it proposes are an affront to personal autonomy, economic security, and the sanctity of private property. This legislation must be opposed for the sake of rural communities, small landowners, and every citizen who values freedom from excessive government intrusion.

This bill violates the 4 amendment and is constitutionally unsound, and not defensible in a court of law, and Oregonians KNOW this.

One of the most alarming aspects of SB 1154 is its apparent intent to impose new taxes on private wells. For countless Oregonians, especially in rural areas, wells are not just a convenience—they are a lifeline. Taxing this essential resource places an unfair burden on those who have invested in self-sufficiency, often because public water systems are unavailable or unreliable. This is not a fair or equitable policy; it's a penalty on independence. Families and farmers who rely on wells to irrigate crops, water livestock, or simply sustain their households could face financial strain, all to fund a bureaucratic scheme that offers no clear benefit in return.

Worse still, the bill reportedly grants the state sweeping authority to regulate well usage and even enter private property without permission. This is a blatant violation of the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures. Imagine a state official showing up unannounced, traipsing across your land, and dictating how you can use the water you've rightfully accessed through your own efforts. This isn't oversight—it's control. It erodes the very concept of private property, turning landowners into mere tenants of the state, subject to its whims.

Perhaps the most egregious provision is the suggestion that the state could revoke access to wells entirely. For those who depend on wells for survival, this is not just an inconvenience—it's an existential threat. Farmers could lose their livelihoods, families could be forced to relocate, and rural communities could wither away. The state has no business stripping citizens of a resource they've legally secured, especially without a transparent justification or due process. What's next—confiscating rainwater barrels or taxing the air we breathe?

Supporters of SB 1154 might claim it's necessary to address water scarcity or environmental concerns, but such arguments ring hollow without evidence that these measures are proportionate or effective.

The economic impact cannot be ignored. Rural Oregonians—already stretched thin by rising costs and regulatory burdens—would bear the brunt of this legislation. Small farmers, in particular, operate on razor-thin margins. Adding taxes and restrictions on their water access could push many to the breaking point, accelerating the decline of family farms and handing an advantage to corporate agribusiness. This isn't progress; it's a step backward for the communities that form the backbone of our state.

Finally, SB 1154 sets a dangerous precedent. If the state can tax and seize control of wells today, what stops it from targeting other personal assets tomorrow? This bill isn't just about water—it's about the erosion of trust between citizens and their government. Oregonians deserve policies that respect their rights, not ones that treat them as subjects to be managed.

Senate Bill 1154 is an unjust, unnecessary, and unconstitutional overreach.