

Submitter: Britney VanCitters
On Behalf Of: myself
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB777

SUBJECT: Vote NO on SB 777

TO: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you as someone who is concerned about anti-wildlife bills coming before your committee. Primarily, I am concerned about Senate Bill 777.

Currently, Oregon's Wolf Predation Loss Compensation Program seems to be working well for many of the folks that benefit. The program supports applicants in implementing required non-lethal tools and livestock management practices to discourage conflict with wolves, which are still recovering across Oregon's landscapes. In the last year of records (2023), Oregon was able to cover 100% of requests for compensation following a livestock loss; and over the next 3 years, the state can expect an influx of additional funds to support non-lethal measures on private land in Oregon.

SB 777 would alter compensation rates from fair market value to five times that amount, during a time when Oregonians and Oregon's legislators are being told to tighten budgets. This 5x multiplier would be unlike most others nationwide, and if approved, the 'loss compensation program' could be rapidly drained. This could have devastating consequences and lead to less support for non-lethal coexistence measures. The need for a 5x multiplier is unclear, and the bill actually accomplishes very little to advance wolf recovery and co-existence in Oregon. In a February 2024 High Country News article, author Ben Goldfarb points to studies in other parts of the country where wolf compensation multiplier bills were passed under the guise of "improving tolerance for wolves"; but in reality, there was very little change in the perception of wolves.

To me, a multiplier so high seems to create a perverse incentive for ranchers. I understand that the cost of lost livestock or a working dog may not be one to one, but FIVE to one is extreme. I'm also concerned about the language in the bill regarding "probable" loss or injury by wolves. I look to Western Watershed Projects efforts to protect lobos in the southwest as a cautionary tale. They cite issues with fraudulent reports of livestock killed by wolves, and there was even an investigation by The Intercept to look further into these fraudulent reports. If there is fraud in a system with

minimal financial benefit (i.e. killing a wolf so livestock survive), then what do we think will happen when a rancher stands to gain 5x the value of livestock? Especially during a time when budgets are tight, groceries are more expensive, utility rates are skyrocketing, and people are struggling to get by... The thought of sacrificing a cow or two to get 5x or 10x that value seems pretty tempting.

I ask that the committee vote NO on SB 777.