



Salem Chamber

Convener | Catalyst | Champion

June 3, 2025

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair

Senator Daniel Bonham, Vice-Chair

Senate Committee on Rules

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

RE: Salem Chamber Written Testimony in Opposition of SB 1153

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

Our organization represents over one thousand (1,000+) local businesses and forty-five thousand (45,000) employees in the Salem area. The breadth and diversity of industries represented by our membership demonstrate an intersection of the small businesses that collectively create our state economy. The Salem Chamber supports a healthy business climate and healthy natural environment understanding that both can be accomplished for economic growth.

Salem is surrounded by agricultural land with small businesses, often family operated, creating our local agricultural industry. Salem businesses support this important industry with related and ancillary companies that also provide jobs in our community. This interconnection between rural and urban areas in our Mid-Willamette Valley is vital to the prosperity of our regional economy, as well as our state economy. Our local agricultural businesses are extremely invested in environmental stewardship and efficient water-use is paramount to the success of our agricultural businesses.

SB 1153 would create seemingly redundant bureaucratic barriers for transfer of water rights withing an already highly regulated industry. Because there are virtually no new water rights, the process of transfer is the only method available for dependable access to water for agriculture. This bill would make water rights transfer an extremely difficult procedure that may force small family agricultural operations out of business, leading to more out-of-state corporate agricultural companies who can afford the cost and significant delays outlined under this proposed legislation.

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) already has a backlog of contested cases, some of which have taken almost a decade to resolve. With federal and state environmental protection, Oregon's agricultural producers are already at the forefront of sustainable farming practices.

Please reconsider the bill until all the water-user stakeholders can provide additional information and participation. We can grow jobs while protecting our water resources.

Respectfully, 

Tom Hoffert, CEO Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

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Tom Hoffert
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce