

Comment Report

HF 2672

A bill for an act relating to forest and fruit-tree reservation tax exemptions, including county participation and minimum size requirements for forest reservations.(Formerly HF 2093.)

Subcommittee Members: Driscoll-CH, Dawson, Jochum

Date: 04/09/2024

Time: 08:00 AM

Location: Senate Lounge

Name: Steven Livingston

Comment: I would like to have an opportunity to speak at the subcommittee meeting tomorrow 4924 at 8am, concerning the forest land tax. My family owns around 2000 acres of forest land in Northeast, Iowa, of this we have 40 acres of crop land that we replanted back to trees, which we call "tree farms" which goes back to the 1970s. We are in the business of protecting and preserving forest land. I would love the opportunity to show you our tree farms. We do not have the cash to pay this tax every year. Even if it's as little as \$6.00 an acre, that's \$12,000 bare minimum we will owe. Our only option is to harvest trees to pay this tax. Which is the exact thing we are trying to prevent. We want to save trees, not kill them. If this new tax goes into effect, we have no other options. Steven Livingston6154290204drslivingstonaol.com

Name: John Schroeder

Comment: Dear Senators,My name is John Schroeder and I am a forester here in Iowa in Dubuque county. I am writing to you to ask you to veto HF 2672 at this time. I regret that I will not be able to present this in person or virtually to you however I will be planting thousands of seedlings in a recently harvested area to fulfill our obligations under the Forest Reserve Act. My biggest worry is the proposed county by county usage of the law. I believe that few counties will be able to look a gift horse in the mouth and will in the process cause many family landowners to sell their lands to more wealthy out of state interests, reduce management they are conducting on their timberlands (which in turn supports jobs and people living in the area), or choose other options that would degrade our already fragile forests even more such as more rapid or careless cutting by people willing to take advantage of landowners new cash strapped position.Keep in mind too that these woodlands produce oxygen, maintain what's left of our water quality, support jobs themselves and are the habitat elements of our deer herd and other wildlife people don't even normally think about. Personally I believe that removing the county by county option and adding the language of shall to the inspection of lands enrolled in the forest reserve would be a better first step. If such grievous damages and abuses are found landowners should be given the choice to correct the abuses and if they still do not make efforts then those landowners should be removed from the FRA. In the process of correcting these issues we would see an increase in forestry jobs in the state. On a more personal note, our business and organization, New Melleray Abbey, currently manages around 1,500 acres of woods in Dubuque county and the savings that the Abbey has derived from the law has directly been applied to the local economy by hiring an assistant forester. By taking advantage of the savings offered through the FRA we have kept a young person in Iowa. This person pays taxes, spends all of her money at local Dubuque businesses, supports schools, and makes the state better simply by her being an active member of our community. The effects of her salary on the local area are much higher and better than a county collecting an extra allotment of taxes. If there is concern that the forestry and natural resources community is not

willing to negotiate or budge, I disagree. I believe that they need to be engaged actively and their concerns taken seriously rather than terms dictated to. If given time to engage in between the next legislative session and a list of needs provided, in good faith, to the people willing to work on this law I believe that a law that increases revenue, addresses the abuse allegations are all possible.