

February 26, 2015

Senator Burns, Representative Hobbins and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jon Olson. I am the Executive Secretary of Maine Farm Bureau, the state's largest general farm organization.

Maine Farm Bureau favors LD 162 – An Act To Protect the Rights of Private Property Owners.

Maine Farm Bureau is a true grassroots organization. All of our policy begins at dozens of farmer meetings throughout the state. Farm Bureau members gather together at their county Farm Bureaus to discuss issues affecting them: commodity issues, crop protection, energy, education, labor, taxation, research and development and so on. After a discussion of these issues, the members vote on them. Those that receive a majority vote become policy for the county Farm Bureau. All of the policies adopted by the county Farm Bureaus are further discussed and voted on by the Voting Delegates at the Maine Farm Bureau Annual Meeting. Those policies that receive a majority vote become policy of Maine Farm Bureau.

One of our major issues is the taking of land without compensation for regulatory protection. For us, it's a question of fairness. It's not fair to take land out of production, sometimes land that has been farmed for generations, without paying for it.

We feel that regulatory takings are closely related to eminent domain. When the government takes land by eminent domain to build a highway, it compensates the landowner. When the government takes land for regulatory protection, it should also compensate the landowner. It seems to us that there is no difference between land taken for the building of a new road or for regulatory protection. Both are takings. The former is compensated for, the latter is not. This is not fair. Both takings need to be compensated.

LD 162 will give fairness back to property owners. We urge its adoption.

Thank you for your attention. I'll be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.