

From: [donald-forbes](#)
To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Subject: The desperation of Republic Services
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Republic Services is desperate. Across the U.S., waste transport by rail is booming, thanks to its efficiency and the advantages of siting landfills in dry climates with stable geology and sparse populations.

Landfills may still be a necessary evil, but they must be responsibly located and strictly managed.

In the Pacific Northwest, only one area meets that standard: east of the Cascades. There, Republic and its rival, Waste Management, operate landfills. Waste Management's Columbia Ridge in eastern Oregon is the gold standard — onsite rail, 120 years of capacity, and strong local support since host fees cover infrastructure and half of residents' property taxes.

Republic's Roosevelt Landfill in Washington, by contrast, faces a crippling "last 5 miles" problem: its rail spur sits 5 miles away across steep terrain, forcing polluting truck hauls. Expansion is blocked by geography.

Not surprisingly, Roosevelt has been hemorrhaging contracts — host Klickitat County lost \$1 million in franchise revenue last year as counties like Skagit shifted to Columbia Ridge.

That leaves Coffin Butte as Republic's last foothold in the Pacific Northwest. Strategically, it is the only site where the company can still compete.

Regulations make siting new landfills west of the Cascades virtually impossible, so Republic leans on Coffin Butte's proximity to customers to cut hauling costs.

But this "advantage" comes at our expense. With no alternatives nearby, Republic inflates tipping fees while forcing waste to move by road in smaller, more environmentally damaging trucks.

The barriers to entry in the landfill business are immense — permitting and developing a new site costs hundreds of millions. Waste Management has locked up the east side with Columbia Ridge. For Republic, Coffin Butte is the only card left to play.

And they play it ruthlessly. Republic needs Coffin Butte not because it is a good location, but because it already exists. County leaders have enabled this, overlooking environmental and safety failures, methane exceedances, odor and noise complaints, and intake violations.

The lax oversight keeps Republic profitable — shifting environmental and health costs onto our community.

If expansion is approved, Republic will be freed of the 1.1 million ton annual intake cap. With

both sides of Coffin Butte Road accepting garbage, public access will be shut down, and the valley will be filled with waste — almost entirely from outside Benton County.

Meanwhile, residents already pay some of the region's highest hauling fees. A Polk County rate comparison found Benton County rates top those of six neighboring counties in 82% of cases — \$6.85 above average for a standard 32/35-gallon bin.

That premium is galling since our shorter transport distances should reduce costs. Instead, we pay more while bearing the environmental and economic harms of a badly sited, badly managed dump.

Make no mistake: Republic's survival in the Pacific Northwest depends entirely on Coffin Butte. Without it, competitors control the market. With it, Republic survives — but only by turning our community into a permanent dumping ground.

Expansion isn't about local needs. It's about corporate survival at our expense.

Don't be fooled. This "limited expansion" is just a foot in the door. Republic isn't spending tens of millions for just six more years of capacity. If expansion is allowed, Coffin Butte will keep expanding into the next century, rendering Northwest Benton County unfit for housing and depriving our county of millions in property taxes.

This is Benton County's crossroads. Either we become Trash Town — trapped in waste and stagnation — or we choose housing, community health and economic vitality by allowing Coffin Butte to close within its current footprint by 2040 as planned.

Our county commissioners must make the wise choice: deny expansion of the Coffin Butte Landfill.

Thank you,

Donald Forbes
1500 NW Garfield Ave
Corvallis, OR 97330