

From: [Sen Gelser Blouin](#)
To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Cc: [Rep Finger McDonald](#); [Sen Gelser Blouin](#)
Subject: Joint testimony in OPPOSITION to Coffin Butte expansion from Senator Gelser Blouin and Representative Finger McDonald
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 8:00:21 AM
Attachments: [2025 Coffin Butte Testimony SGB SFG.Final.pdf](#)

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Attached, please find our joint testimony in opposition to the expansion of Coffin Butte Landfill. Please include this written testimony in the public record.

Sincerely,
Sara and Sarah

Senator Sara Gelser Blouin
Senate District 8

Representative Sarah Finger McDonald
House District 16

Senator
Sara Gelser Blouin
Senate District 8



Representative
Sarah Finger McDonald
House District 16

October 15, 2025

Benton County Board of Commissioners
4500 SW Research Way
Corvallis, OR 97333

Dear Commissioners Wyse, Malone and Shepherd:

We write today to express our opposition to the expansion of the Coffin Butte Landfill.

Over the last several years, we've listened to constituents voice deep concern about the impact Coffin Butte has on the health, safety, livability and environmental integrity of the area surrounding landfill. It is clear to us that residents in the vicinity of the landfill are nearly unanimous in their opposition of expansion.

It is not surprising to hear such concerns from the people who live in closest proximity to the landfill. For that reason, and because of the regional significance of the landfill, we've both listened carefully and been cautious about taking a public position on this application. However, everything we've learned combined with a well-financed effort to solicit input from elected officials *outside* our area led us to reconsider. We've both come to the conclusion that we must speak up for our constituents and publicly express our opposition to this application. Expanding Coffin Butte is not just an economic issue. It is an environmental, health, and livability issue and at best a short-term fix to handling solid waste in our region.

Regional concerns and local sacrifices

We appreciate the legitimate interest of businesses and local governments outside of Benton County in the disposition of this application. Solid waste management is a thorny issue, and one that requires focused attention from leaders and community members across the state. Coffin Butte has become the safety net for waste disposal for other communities. In fact, recent closure and diminished operations of other Oregon landfills and incinerators has nearly doubled the amount of waste hauled to Coffin Butte each

year. The relief this provides to other jurisdictions and their citizens allows them to put off making hard decisions about waste disposal and comes at an extraordinary expense to our constituents, their health, and their businesses. While we appreciate the challenges faced by other communities, we simply do not believe it is fair or appropriate to force our constituents to continue sacrificing their health, livelihoods and livability for the benefit of other communities.

The consequences of landfill operations in Benton County directly impact the constituents we serve alongside you- the residents of Benton County. Benton County residents should be centered in the discussion and decision making about this issue.

Cost concerns for Benton County residents

Expansion advocates argue expansion is necessary to protect our constituents from increased costs related to solid waste. We've also been told failure to approve an expansion will leave Benton County residents with no place to dispose of their waste without costly shipping across the state.

This is simply not true. As you know, the County has the authority to determine any rate increases for waste disposal. In addition, the current franchise agreement requires Republic to accept Benton County solid waste through 2040. Denying the expansion may require Republic to make some tough choices--- reduce hauling from other locations into Coffin Butte or take on the cost of hauling Benton County waste elsewhere. However, that burden falls to Republic Services, a company with a total net income of \$2.04 billion in 2024.

Because Benton County residents are guaranteed waste disposal through 2040, there is no imminent risk of price increases or loss of disposal solutions for our constituents.

Temporary solution, permanent consequences

Advocates are presenting the expansion of Coffin Butte as a long-term solution to our region's solid waste disposal challenges. However, with current disposal volumes, the expansion of the landfill will only extend its life by at most a few years. If the expansion is granted, it is a short-term fix that will permanently alter the landscape of Benton County and extend the impact of dust, debris, and odor caused by waste dumping and truck traffic. The enormity of this impact will not be compensated for by a few extra years of life for Coffin Butte.

Long term planning doesn't require expansion now

We are surprised that expansion advocates are now arguing that HB 3794, legislation introduced by Representative Finger McDonald and sponsored by both of us, makes approval of the expansion application essential. The taskforce formed by HB 3794 will look at solid waste issues across our region. It anticipates the closure of Coffin Butte and the

need to develop a responsible, forward looking waste management plan for our region. This is work that must be done regardless of whether the landfill is expanded. It is frustrating to see the taskforce's work used to justify forcing the people of Benton County to continue disproportionately shouldering the burden of Oregon's waste stream.

This isn't what Coffin Butte neighbors signed up for

Concerns of families and businesses in the vicinity of Coffin Butte have been repeatedly dismissed by expansion advocates who argue neighbors chose to locate their homes and businesses near a landfill. However, when the history of Coffin Butte is considered, the neighbors' concerns are clearly justified. The property started as a small, community landfill and grew in spurts until its operations increased rapidly in recent years. Coffin Butte Landfill is no longer a local landfill. It is a large regional landfill. The yearly tonnage of waste accepted by Coffin Butte increased by 86% between 2016 and 2023. Its impact on neighboring properties could not have been anticipated even just a few years ago. Many of these neighbors moved to the area decades ago.

If the landfill is expanded and the 1.1-million-ton cap on the waste Coffin Butte can accept each year is eliminated, the impacts surrounding properties already experience - overwhelming odor, persistent dust, and or the inability to graze livestock on longtime pastures due to plastics and particles that escape from the dump - will be exacerbated. The Benton County Planning Commission recognized these repercussions when they voted unanimously to reject the expansion proposal.

We've been told by expansion advocates that objections are only coming from a small number of angry, disgruntled, and misinformed people. Our constituents are thoughtful, concerned, and deeply knowledgeable about soil, water, and environmental science. It is disappointing to hear advocates speak about our constituents with such disrespect.

Managing waste isn't easy, but interpreting the will of our community is (in this case)

We are both committed to long term solutions for the future of waste management in Oregon. We are also committed to continued partnership with Republic Services to deploy innovative technologies to mitigate the environmental impacts of the landfill while it accepts waste and after its closure. We know there are no easy solutions. It will take creative thinking from people across all the counties that bring waste to Coffin Butte to map out a future for a sustainable, fair, and safe strategy to manage the materials we discard. We also firmly believe that work does not require, or justify, an expansion of the Coffin Butte Landfill.

Denial of the expansion will not deprive Benton County residents of a waste disposal site and does not have to increase their disposal costs. Denying the application cannot undo the harm caused to our community by the rapid growth of Coffin Butte, but it can stop more harm from occurring.

We appreciate the pressures of this situation and the complexity of the issues you must weigh in making this decision. That said, after visiting with proponents and opponents, conducting site visits, and studying the history of the landfill, we are both convinced that the harm done to our constituents by continuing to expand the landfill far outweighs any short-term benefit of its growth.

We strongly urge you to deny the application to expand the Coffin Butte Landfill.

Sincerely,



Sara Gelser Blouin
State Senator
Corvallis, Adair Village, Albany, South
Salem Millersburg, Tangent and
surrounding areas



Sarah Finger McDonald
State Representative
Corvallis and Adair Village