



Oregon
Environmental
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It's Your Oregon

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Testimony to the Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee on SB 212

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

The Oregon Environmental Council opposes SB 212.

This bill would phase out Oregon's very successful Vehicle Inspection Program, potentially creating additional limitations on new and expanding industry and making good air quality harder to achieve.

The Vehicle Inspection Program delivers a cost-effective way to reduce smog-forming air pollutants that are regulated under the federal Clean Air Act. These pollutants contribute to ground-level ozone, which is a serious health threat that exacerbates respiratory illnesses, including asthma. Oregon adults have a higher burden of asthma (both lifetime and current) than in the overall U.S.ⁱ In 2009, Oregon had the highest prevalence of adults with asthma in the nation.ⁱⁱ In the coming year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is poised to tighten ozone standards. It would be unwise to make any changes to the program before the U.S. EPA acts.

Cars also emit dangerous pollutants that increase our risk of cancer, including benzene, acrolein, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde and 1,3-butadiene. The Vehicle Inspection Program helps tackle these serious health threats.

If we lose the Vehicle Inspection Program, we not only lose a valuable tool for protecting Oregonians' health, but may also shift the responsibility for reducing pollution from the transportation sector to new and expanding industries, and potentially add new air quality requirements to existing businesses. The Vehicle Inspection Program could be the deciding factor as to whether the Portland and Medford regions are found in or out of compliance with the federal Clean Air Act when EPA tightens the ozone standard. If either region is found out of compliance and the Vehicle Inspection Program has been eliminated, industries that emit smog-forming pollution will have to do more to reduce their own emissions.

If the Vehicle Emissions Program is phased out, Oregon may have to pursue single-source reduction solutions, which could be more complicated and expensive. These programs could impact small businesses, one of the main employers in the state. It would be ironic to eliminate this program while Oregon is still struggling to recover from the recession only to create near-term job losses and hinder economic development in the future.

Eliminating the Vehicle Inspection Program would unfairly put the full responsibility for maintaining air quality on businesses and industries alone when all sectors should do their fair share.



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The program also employs 110 Oregonians in southern and northern Oregon. Eliminating the program would put those individuals out of work.

The Vehicle Inspection Program has been effective. It encourages people to fix their emissions control systems in advance of being inspected. It controls for multiple pollutants that harm health. It distributes responsibility fairly and creates room for businesses to grow. It has been streamlined, and DEQ has been proactive in finding ways to make it as easy as possible for all of us who are car owners in the Portland and Medford regions to participate in this important way to do our fair share to keep our air clean. OEC urges you to preserve the Vehicle Inspection Program.

ⁱ CDC National Asthma Control Program. (2008). Asthma in Oregon. http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/stateprofiles/Asthma_in_OR.pdf

ⁱⁱ National Center for Environmental Health. (2011). 2009 Adult asthma data: Prevalence tables and maps. <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/brfss/09/current/chartC1.htm>