

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Fr: Richard F. Wisner
Siletz, Lincoln County

Re: Senate Bill 1507 – testimony in opposition

Chair Dembrow, Vice-chair Olsen and Committee members;

To begin with, my argument this afternoon is basically, “what’s the rush”? The short session is not the venue in which to pursue this truly all-encompassing legislation. Giving thought to the undertaking it is obvious that taking up this so-called Cap & Invest bill during this year’s short session does not allow the time required for thorough and accurate investigation into what is the best course for Oregon. For a second thing, and perhaps even more importantly, this is not what the voters of Oregon agreed to in 2010 when having a second legislative session was voted in.

For the sake of accuracy, this bill ought be called The Cap & Tax Plan as that is precisely what it is. Whether or not it is an “investment” is yet to be seen. Remember, when talking of climate change timescales we need to keep in mind that we are speaking in terms of centuries, decades, millennia, eons, ages – so again, what’s the rush?

There are sufficient examples of the economic downside of too much shifting away from fossil fuels all too soon, such actions result in typically poor results answering the call to *do something* without sufficient time to consider what the consequences may be. It all sounds good on paper but the economic results in Germany & South Australia, even California, illustrate the downsides.

One incontestable fact is that atmospheric CO² concentration has risen and fallen in the past with absolutely no help at all from humankind. It is equally certain there is no evidence to suggest this rising and falling will not continue - forever. There is little evidence to suggest that the amount of CO² contributed by human activity does indeed have any appreciable affect on atmospheric temperature.

As more than one knowledgeable source has mentioned climate models used to project future trends “are very nice, but they are not reality and they are not evidence.” If you doubt climate models are unreliable, then perhaps the IPCC themselves can convince you. Their Working Group 1 assesses the

physical scientific aspect of the climate system and climate change. In 2007, Working Group 1 said, "We should recognize that we are dealing with a coupled non-linear chaotic system, and therefore that the long-term prediction of future climate is not possible."

The greatest challenge facing Oregon voters these days is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda. For example, the term global warming has given way to the term climate change primarily because the former is not supported by the data. The term climate change, admits to all kinds of illogical attributions. If it warms up, that's climate change. If it cools down, ditto. Any change whatsoever can be said to be proof of climate change. Hence we now see weather phenomena attributed to climate change.

It is appearing more often than not that climate change is no longer a scientific argument; it's a political and moral argument dressed up in the garb of science. The proposed Cap & Invest legislation is mostly an economic issue dressed up as an environmental issue. For example, if the root cause of climate change is seen as a consequence of a domineering market economy, extending the reach of that market through carbon trading seems to offer more of the same. If climate change is a consequence of unsustainable market consumption, perhaps a more profound alternative is needed than merely a plan for changing the parameters but which still leaves such consumption in place.

And let us not conflate carbon dioxide with carbon. Calling CO² *carbon* is akin to calling H²O hydrogen. To be sure, regardless of the Supreme Court ruling in Massachusetts vs. U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (2007), carbon, the building block of all life on earth, is not a pollutant. Their 5 – 4 decision amplifies the disagreement and ought put to rest the idea of any consensus, scientific or otherwise, on the matter.

Fossil fuel-dependent technologies have and continue to ensure that humanity's progress and well-being are no longer hostage to nature's whims. Progress today depends on technological change; economic development; trade in goods, services and ideas and human capital. The more we prosper, the more we can prosper. Fossil fuels are critical for maintaining the current level of progress and our economic well-being.

It may be possible to replace fossil fuels in the future. But as high subsidies and mandates for renewable energy currently attest, renewables are unable to sustain themselves today. Perhaps, with continued help from fossil fuels, new ideas will foster technologies that will enable a natural transition

away from such fuels. Perhaps. It is not a done deal. As we all know there are no guarantees. But for the legislature to act as if taxing energy now will make any difference in global atmospheric temperatures in one hundred years is a bit of a stretch. The fact is that we do not know for sure what the effects of Cap & Trade will be, on balance, in ten, fifty or one hundred or two hundred years hence.

What we do know is that if this legislation passes, state agencies budgets will be inflated. Additional energy costs will be incurred – by everyone, all while Oregon is suffering severe budgetary troubles. This is not right. The Committee should not take up this legislation during the short session. It is just plain wrong to do so. As if anyone needed reminding, there are plenty other issues that need attention at this time. Isn't it just a bit of hubris to imagine that we humans can manage the planet's climate when we are not even able to manage our budget?

The various visions of economic development in Oregon have differing implications for how we approach the issue of climate change. Cap & trade is but one of many contentious issues underlying the tensions between securing development and tackling climate change. Unavoidably, trade-offs will need to be made. If the legislature took the entire 35 days on HB 4001 it is still not sufficient time to pick the winners and losers.

Voices opposed to costly measures of dubious benefit designed to "help us" are becoming more vocal I am happy to notice. People are becoming better informed and, more importantly, after seeing other sides of the arguments are coming to their own conclusions. As it should be. The differing solutions offered by others flow from beliefs and values held by the citizenry that come from our different judgments of the risks and precautions. Perhaps at the heart of the confusion of what is the best course to set are the differing ways we all think about progress.

Individual beliefs about our role in the world shape our sense of duty and responsibility to care for others and our planet. They affect the way we think about climate and how we interpret our role in the changes which are occurring. But we don't all see the world and our relationship with it in the same way. Given that our beliefs do not always converge, it isn't surprising we find that neither do the ways we approach climate change or our responses to it. Allow the time to let other voices be heard.

Living here in coastal Oregon all my life, pushing seventy years now, I can easily see the air and waterways are cleaner than in my youth. Any trip to the valley bears that out. We, Oregon, have been and are making progress. Let's continue doing so.

As British historian Thomas Macaulay said, "On what principal is it, that when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?" It may sound childish and simplistic but recall the story of the tortoise and the hare. That is a lesson we need to keep in mind. Slow and steady gets it done. If nothing else it may minimize mistakes discovered later on.

Again, what is the rush?

Thank you for your time and consideration.