

February 7, 2018

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Chair Senator Michael Dembrow
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Chair Representative Ken Helm

Re: Testimony for HB4001 and SB1507 – Clean Energy Jobs Bill
Public Hearing scheduled 2/7/2018
Email: senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Senator Dembrow and Representative Helm:

I am a Portland area resident and voter in Senate District 18 and House District 36. I strongly support the Clean Energy Jobs bill. It will position Oregon to be a leader in the rapidly-growing green energy economy. It will make significant investments throughout rural Oregon. Crucially, it takes necessary steps towards mitigating the devastating impact of global warming.

I used to be a physicist, specializing in cosmology; I have a “big picture” perspective regarding climate change, so bear with me. There are ~60 billion solar systems just like ours in the galaxy, with “Sun-like” stars and “Earth-like” planets. Ours is a newcomer, relatively speaking, most others have been around for hundreds of millions of years before Earth was ever formed. If even one of these 60 billion solar systems managed to grow intelligent life like us, they should be all over the galaxy by now (just imagine where we should be in 100 million years) – but they aren’t.

This is known as “Fermi’s Paradox”, and it tells us that it is **extremely** difficult for a global civilization to be sustainable – that is, they all seem to have died off eventually, one way or another, by not prioritizing sustainability. Fermi’s paradox would suggest that we have ~1: 10 million odds of surviving the next few thousand years, due to unsustainable practices, like ignoring global warming. I’m concerned that we aren’t taking this threat seriously.

Global warming is a “tragedy of the commons” issue, where individual actors would rather everyone else bear the costs – of course this doesn’t work. Just as insidious, the most devastating effects of global warming only manifest after the damage is done beyond a point of no return, which we are only just beginning to see realized with historic forest fires and droughts. The only way to solve this problem is to lead and build coalitions – such as with California / Quebec / BC / Ontario’s WCI – which is exactly what these bills set us up for.

It is morally – existentially even – critical that strong action is taken immediately. There are countless worthy priorities to pursue, but working to ensure our survival must come first. It is the height of cynicism to be cavalier, to delay or to play political games about such matters.

On the other hand, this bill will unleash a considerable investment in rural Oregon, creating much needed jobs while positioning Oregon to take advantage of the future green economy. Roughly, for every \$1 spent towards renewable energy jobs, 3-times as many jobs are created as \$1 spent towards fossil fuel jobs. This bill most closely matches California’s AB-32, which was in place while CA’s economy boomed throughout the great recession. We have the luxury of not being the first state to attempt this kind of legislation, so we don’t have to worry about hypothetical impacts to the economy. The evidence is in, this legislation will create jobs, it will grow our economy, and it will do it in a way that disproportionately benefits rural Oregon.

You don’t even need to care about sustainability to support this bill. It would be the right thing to do for Oregon on its economic merits alone, especially for rural Oregon.

I am inspired by the strong leadership from Senator Dembrow, Representative Helm, and their numerous bi-partisan / cross-chamber work groups that I watched closely over the last year. I've never paid serious attention to Oregon legislation before, but their leadership had me making trips to Salem just to watch it unfold and to listen to the different perspectives voiced. Thanks to the hard work put in over the last few years, this has become a historically well-vetted bill of its kind. It has undergone more scrutiny, and has deeply considered more perspectives for longer than any other such carbon-capping bill in American history. As a result, it is practically inconceivable that further debate should be required for the furtherance of this bill. By any reasonable standard of vetting and debate, this bill is ready to move quickly, for a joint committee vote in time to be considered in the full legislature, regardless of the length of the session.

Sincerely,

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