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To: [SENR Exhibits](#)
Subject: Oregon Cap and Trade: Clever Accounting and Creative PR
Date: Saturday, January 18, 2020 10:17:39 AM

Oregon Legislature
Senate Interim Committee On Environment and Natural Resource
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January 18, 2020

“The real danger is when politicians and CEOs are making it look like real action is happening when in fact almost nothing is being done apart from clever accounting and creative PR.” –Greta Thunberg

Thunberg’s right when it comes to Oregon cap-and-trade. Here’s why: the Oregon Global Warming Commission’s board vacancies in industries most vulnerable under today’s cap-and-trade plan reveals intended peril; today’s plan makes records on implementation and outcome confidential; the segmentation and distribution of funds to impacted communities is, at best, tokenism.

The Oregon Global Warming Commission is a governor-appointed board of industry leaders who recommend tactics to reverse climate change (Oregon Global Warming Commission, 2020), like cap-and-trade, without sacrificing their industries’ futures. Sector positions for transportation, forestry, and agriculture remain vacant (Oregon Global Warming Commission, 2020). Governor Brown, allowing these vacancies, snuffs social equity. The result: favoritism, lip-service, and profit. The energy sector’s voting board member, Maria Pope (CEO of PGE), and her interests within the Commission is a fine example. With today’s plan, carbon credits from Oregon are guaranteed to electric companies for the exact amount of emissions they produce, for free (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 21). Not only is this counter-productive to publicized intent, but electric companies can sell their free carbon credits for profit (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 68). While revenue from what’s sold should benefit customers (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 68), where is accountability if records are inaccessible?

Oregon fails on transparency. Pressure on Ginger McCall to represent Governor Brown’s interests and not that of Oregonians led to her resignation as Public Records Advocate (Sabatier, 2019). Over \$1 billion is owed to rural counties because Oregon clandestinely reinterpreted the Forest Acquisition Act (Sickinger, 2019). Now, the most impactful piece of legislation in our lifetime is exempt from public records policy (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 51). Citizen welfare isn’t a priority because Oregonians are denied equitable access to these future records.

Concessions made in today’s plan do little to avert poverty. Today’s plan states, “...shall endeavor to distribute the majority of the moneys [from the Climate Investment Fund] ...for uses that benefit impacted communities” (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 60-61). This is after 100% of the Climate Investment Fund is promised to other beneficiaries (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 60-61). Funds designated for impacted communities won’t go to its recipients. State agencies already injuring Oregonians with PERS debt, archaic administrative systems, and failing welfare programs will receive these funds. What’s worse is that deposits into the Climate Investment Fund make up an insignificant portion of forecasted revenue. Moneys will also deposit into the Transportation Decarbonization Investments Account (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 54), Common School Fund (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 65), PUC Trust (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 69), Traded Sector Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program Fund (LC 0019, 2020, pp. 75), and others.

Today’s cap-and-trade plan does little to impact climate change. It does, however, advance socioeconomic disparities throughout Oregon. This is done through clever accounting and creative PR. The culprits? Politicians and CEOs.

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