

**Senate Committee on Energy and Environment**

**February 9, 2021**

Joint Testimony in Support of SCR 17

Chair Senator Beyer, Vice-Chair Senator Findley, and Member Senators Dembrow, Robinson, and Taylor,

My name is Robin Morris Collin. I am the Norma Paulus Professor of Law at Willamette University College of Law. I am submitting my testimony jointly with Professor Robert Collin (ret). We are speaking in our personal capacities. We urge you to support SCR 17.

Thank you for this opportunity to record Oregon's history with environmental justice for the record. Oregon has led the states – mostly without acknowledgement – in developing a locally authentic way to incorporate environmental justice into the work of our government agencies. The principles of SCR 17 have roots in both Oregon and nationally. Our experience with the Oregon and national roots of Environmental Justice principles and the movement for environmental justice is briefly described in this letter. The message of our experiences is that the principles of SCR 17 are true to Oregon's experience and our nations experience, and they are fundamental principles framing the new dialogues of climate equity.

Oregon Environmental Justice Beginnings at the University of Oregon: CAER

The Coalition Against Environmental Racism (CAER) began in 1993 at the University of Oregon, when students of color approached Professor Robert Collin. In 1994 Professor Morris Collin joined him as faculty organizer for CAER. The student government was the primary funder of all 10 conferences and CAER students organized conferences until recently. These conferences brought national Environmental Justice Advocates to regional and local EJ people and students and helped introduce the Principles of Environmental Justice into the Pacific Northwest.

The principles of SCR 17 echo those we heard then. The big difference is that these principles are directly from our Oregon EJ communities in a time of climate change, when vulnerability to the risks of climate change increase.

Federal EJ: Oregon Engagement

While serving Oregon in multiple forums on environmental justice, we also served at the national level. The combination of our service in these multiple forums shows how Oregon influenced the evolution of the implementation of environmental justice locally and fed our experiences back into the evolving dialog of environmental justice at the national level.

Our EJ appointments to EPA advisory committees often overlapped with our Oregon EJ work. From 1994 to 1998 we served on a Federal Advisory committee – the CommonSense Initiative – as EJ representatives. From 1999 to 2001, Professor Morris Collin served on the National Advisory Committee on Environment Policy and Technology (NACEPT). Professor Robert Collin served on this Advisory Committee from 2019. Professor Robert Collin served the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (NEJAC), from 2002 to 2005. Professor Robert Collin was also an External Peer Reviewer of the US EPA, Cumulative Risk Assessment Methodology in 2003. He also is one a handful of expert witnesses

certified by the federal courts.<sup>1</sup>

The principles in SCR 17 echo those we heard in all our federal committees. The big difference is that these principles are directly from our EJ communities in a time of climate change. There is a heightened sense of urgency and emphasis on cumulative impacts.

### Oregon Environmental Justice

Governor's Exec. Order No. 98-16 (August 1, 1997) Governor Kitzhaber established The Governors Environmental Justice Board (GEJAB). Our designated support officer from the Governor's Office was Curtis Robinhold. In that capacity, we held hearings in EJ communities across the state. The GEJAB was the beneficiary of previous work under Governor Roberts and the GEJAB was succeeded in 2008 by the legislatively created Oregon Environmental Justice Taskforce (EJTF). Professor Morris Collin was its founding chair and she continued to serve as a representative of the Oregon Commission for Black Affairs until 2016. Professor Robert Collin is a founding appointment, its second Chair and has continued to serve in a variety of capacities until the present as its current vice-chair. In its 11 years, Oregon's EJTF has invested its time in listening to the concerns of communities across Oregon and bringing Oregon's natural resource agencies to these communities to connect them in an atmosphere of accountability and collaboration. These efforts reestablish trust in our government and support the noble intentions and motivations of our natural resource employees.

The principles of SCR 17 are principles long held by EJ communities and advocates. These principles provide a road map for all state agencies when it is needed the most – in a new era of climate policy. The principles in SCR 17 echo those we heard in all our community meetings. The big difference is that SCR 17 principles are directly from our EJ communities in a time of climate change.

### Environmental Justice is a Core Public Purpose for Our Common Future

This Joint Resolution recognizes a legitimate public purpose of achieving racial equity in our public places and public policies. Recognition of this public purpose is essential to our common future. As we work to address the challenges we face, we must not avoid the history of disinvestment and disproportionate adverse health and environmental consequences that are now part of our contemporary condition. We must recognize that we are starting from a point of inequity, especially for black, indigenous and people of color communities. Any truly reparative and restorative action must acknowledge the consequences of racism on all of our communities, even as we develop policies and plans to remedy climate change, fire suppression, water distribution, and public health.

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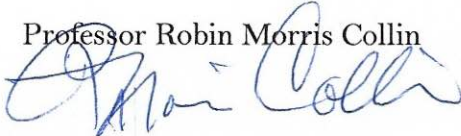
<sup>1</sup> Spokane Tribe, Environmental Justice Expert Witness, US Federal Court. Certified Environmental Justice Expert, Spokane Tribe vs. Dawn Mining, Consent Decree January 7, 2012, a settlement agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Interior (DOI), Dawn Mining Company, LLC, and its corporate parent, Newmont USA Ltd. was approved by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.



We urge you to embrace the recognition in this resolution that equity is an essential foundation to the work of public policy. The roadmap of SCR17 will build our future, better than it was before.

We urge you to support SCR 17. Thank you.

Professor Robin Morris Collin

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robin Collin", written in a cursive style.

Professor Robert Collin (retired)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Collin", written in a cursive style.