

To Whom it May Concern:

Please pass HB 3372 and strengthen DEQ's denial authority found in ORS468.070. Currently, Oregon DEQ thinks it does not have the legal authority to deny operating permits to documented Chronic Environmental Violators such as NW Metals, Inc. Despite the outcry to deny the air quality operating permit for NW Metals, Inc., which would now like to do business in the St. Johns neighborhood, weaknesses and loopholes in the verbiage of Oregon law undermine DEQ's enforcement authority and yield head-scratching decisions--ones that should be no-brainers--such as the acceptance of NW Metals, Inc.'s application for an air quality operating permit.. As a long-time resident of the Cully neighborhood in NE Portland, I'm intensely aware of the negative impacts caused by this company. My home sits 3 blocks downwind of the NW Metals operation which rendered this entire neighborhood an uninhabitable toxic waste cloud for days after the five-alarm fire in March 2018.

Moving a toxic, pollution spewing business from one low income community which disproportionately experiences the negative impacts of heavy industry to another community which disproportionately experiences the negative impacts of heavy industry is no way for any self-respecting government to handle the grave responsibility of protecting the citizens which entrusted it with such a noble purpose. The people of St. Johns and Cully and their many historically marginalized residents are no less deserving of a pollution less quality of life than those wealthier neighborhoods with more money, time, wherewithal, and resources to prevent an unneighborly company such as NW Metals from befouling its environment.

One can acknowledge that certain accomodations can be made for the sake of business and simultaneously recognize that certain businesses with an actual, documented track record of negligent malfeasance which LITERALLY KILLS and DESTROYS LIVES and HOMES should not be able to have a home in Cully, in St. Johns, or anywhere in Portland, or anywhere in Oregon for that matter. If the state of Oregon and its DEQ can't stop NW Metals from doing any more harm, then who can Oregon stop? People, that's who.

If NW Metals, Inc. were an actual person, and not a company with the arbitrary legal distinction and protections as a corporation, he/she/it would actually face repercussions and possibly be sitting in a prison cell for behavior that civilized society has deemed unsafe for the greater good and punishable by incarceration. Alas, NW Metals, Inc. is a corporate entity, and not an individual, and as such we can't hold it to the same standards of comportment as an actual human. We can, however, use this moment after the evaluation of NW Metals' application for a permit and treat NW Metals like the toxic, destructive polluter that it is. This application process has clarified a glaring weakness in Oregon environmental law and thus is an opportunity to make clear where our values and priorities as Oregonians stand. Choose life. Pass HB 3372 and strengthen the DEQ denial authority found in ORS468.070 which would allow DEQ to deny the air quality operating permits for bad actors such as NW Metals, Inc..

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Andrew E. Pritchard