

Chair and Members of Committee on Energy and Environment: Of all the issues before the Oregon legislature, climate change is the most pressing for the welfare of all Oregonians, as well as all human and non-human beings. Climate models predict that the average earth surface temperature will rise by 2.4 to 6.4 degrees C by the year 2100. Climate scientists have concluded that without significant global efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions, the earth could soon pass a tipping point that would lead to a runaway "Hothouse Earth" effect, with a much higher global average temperature than any interglacial period in the past 1.2 million years.

The impact of earth's warming on human health is enormous and varied. The direct effects of climate change on human health include heat-related illnesses and deaths; increased floods and droughts (often followed by malnutrition due to loss of cropland); the spread of infectious diseases to wider geographical ranges, both in latitude and altitude, as mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue fever and West Nile virus, tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease, and rodent-borne illnesses such as hantavirus follow the warming trends; a longer seasonal duration of biogenic allergens; cardiorespiratory problems due to increased ground-level ozone concentrations and smoke from wildfires; increase in water-related diseases as water scarcity and rising sea levels lead to freshwater contamination; algal blooms with associated cholera outbreaks; increased outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis due to heavy rainfall; and the threat to human health and well-being by the more violent storms associated with warming.

Your resolution urging Congressional passage and Presidential signing of the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act is an important step that the 81st Legislative Assembly can take to move the needle on greenhouse gas emissions. Along with other bills to promote forest carbon sequestration, you have the opportunity now to have a far-reaching impact on the health and well-being of future Oregonians. It is time to look way beyond the next biennium and take the long view that reaches 500 or 1000 years into the future. Restoring the proper relationship of humans with the earth in a way that promotes sustainability in the whole system is what Thomas Berry has called "the great work" of our generation.