

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

**SOCAN**

Confronting Climate Change

<https://socan.eco>

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Chair Marsh and members of the Oregon House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment:

I write as Co-facilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, an organization of over 2000 rural Southern Oregonians and friends who are concerned about the climate crisis and urge statewide action to address it. The mission of SOCAN is to promote awareness and understanding of the science of climate change and motivate appropriate individual and collection action. As rural Oregonians, we live on the frontlines of the climate crisis because we directly and immediately live with the increasing risk of drought, wildfires, and extreme weather that the climate crisis imposes. As a result, we strongly approve the concept that state agencies with authority over areas of our lives that allow them, through policy and rule, to increase or decrease the climate crisis should be encouraged to focus on whatever they can do to decrease that crisis. Since transportation emissions are a major component of our statewide contribution to this climate crisis, we endorse efforts by DEQ to curtail those emissions.

It should be evident to even the most casual observer, let alone a state legislator, that transportation based on the internal combustion engine is (a) the source of toxic pollution that compromises the health of exposed communities, as well as (b) among the largest contributors in the Oregon economy, as measured and regulated by DEQ, to worsening the climate crisis.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970 then Republican President Richard Nixon proposed the establishment of a federal Environmental Protection Agency. It began operation later that year when Nixon signed an Executive Order enabling its existence. William Ruckelshaus was confirmed by the Senate as its first Administrator. The EPA mission states that it: **protects people and the environment from significant health risks, sponsors and conducts research, and develops and enforces environmental regulations.**

Several years earlier, the Oregon legislature acknowledged the same array of environmental problems that confronted Richard Nixon and established the state DEQ. As identified on its website, the Oregon DEQ's mission is **to be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water.** This Mission statement does **NOT** add the caveat "but only so long as the legislature approves." Presumably this was identified as the agency's mission when DEQ was established in 1968 – over fifty years ago – during Tom McCall's

governorship. The bottom line is that the legislature granted the state DEQ authority to protect our land, air and water five decades ago.

By the same token, the Oregon Department of Health Mission is **ensuring all people and communities can achieve optimum physical, mental, and social well-being through partnerships, prevention, and access to quality, affordable health care**. This does not demand that programs, policies and rules promulgated by OHA shall require legislative debate and approval. The reason for establishing state agencies is to engage experts and professionals to undertake the management of various aspects of our lives and not have legislators, who are mostly neither expert nor professional in the respective disciplines of the agencies.

The language of HB 3022 seems designed to undermine the mission of the agency. Instead of proposing the bill in question, it's authors might have been more honest had they simply proposed to abolish the agency and declare Oregon's air, land and water in a perpetually untarnished condition regardless of the abuses visited upon them by human activity.

We all know, but let's remind ourselves, that the only reason our national and state lands, air and water are exhibit such health as they exhibit is because of rules imposed by the federal EPA and the state DEQ. Had these agencies not developed and imposed rules, our land, air and water would now be a soup of toxic chemicals.

Imagine you were a Board of Directors of a symphony orchestra. Would you hire a Music Director and then inform him or her that before programming anything by Beethoven they must get Board approval? Imagine, again, you are the Board of an NFL football team, and you hire a coach to take you to the Super Bowl and win it. Would you instruct the coach that he/she is only allowed to call a quarterback sneak if he/she first gets permission from the Board. I think both examples make it clear how totally insane it is to establish an agency with responsibility for protecting our air and then deny that agency the authority to protect our health from a major a threat within its stated authority before gaining legislative approval.

It is not understating the case, I submit, to argue that imposing limits on agencies that require they shall undertake only action within the designated authority that is specifically granted to them if they are granted legislative approval is transparently insane. Proposals such as HB3022 defeat the whole purpose of establishing state agencies. It takes an extreme degree of arrogance for legislators to infer that just because they have been elected, they have suddenly been conferred with greater expertise in arenas moderated by the agencies than those hired by the agencies.

This proposal may be designed to protect vehicle and fossil fuel corporations, but it also demands that Oregon further promote global warming and climate change - including the droughts, wildfires, and extreme weather events that are threatening all residents of the state. As stated above, rural Oregonians live on the frontlines of the climate crisis and are committed to addressing its root cause and transportation is one of these root causes. We vehemently

oppose proposals such as HB3022 that are designed to increase drought, wildfire risk, and extreme weather events and destroy rural Oregon.

If members of the Climate, Energy, and Environment committee genuinely care about our climate, energy and environment, this proposal will receive zero votes. Its proposers should be embarrassed at the abject obscenity of the concept embodied in this bill.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Journet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "A" and "J".

Alan Journet