

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

As an individual County Commissioner, I join with colleagues and partners from across the state to express my support for the “Make Polluters Pay” legislation, introduced this session as SB 1541.

I am sure you already know that local governments face budgetary pulls in all directions and constant cost pressures with little relief. Preparing for, and reacting to, climate disasters has become one of those pressures.

Recently, Benton County has been working on building and maintaining evacuation routes for communities that only have one point of egress. Just a few years ago, in partnership with Oregon State University, the Benton Community Foundation, the State, and the Corvallis Rural Fire Protection District pooled resources to create a fire evacuation route for residents. Money made available to local jurisdictions by this proposed legislation would help us cover costs for additional, similar projects and prepare our residents, so they don’t have to face one of their fears: an incoming fire with nowhere to run.

As temperatures rise and stay high for long periods of time, the need for cooling centers has become more and more dire. Most of the residential housing built in Benton County was built in a time when it was extremely rare to even get to 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. Now, we regularly pass that number for days on end, with little evening relief.

It wasn’t until recent years (after changes in state law) that some landlords of student housing would even allow AC units. Support from the state, by way of this legislation, could help my constituents get the relief they need during the hottest time of the year.

I appreciate the argument made by proponents of this legislation that this bill is a taxpayer relief bill. They note that, at this time, no Oregon-based businesses meet the emission threshold to be held liable under the bill. Rather, it will hold the largest global polluters accountable for the costs to Oregonians from climate damage caused by their products based on global past emissions from 1995-2024.

I strongly urge you to support this bill for the betterment of our communities.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Gabe Shepherd

Desk: 541-766-6813

Cell: 541-609-9136

Email: gabe.shepherd@bentoncountyor.gov

www.Bentoncountyor.gov