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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or SB1541  
Topic:

We are all paying the price for climate change. In strictly monetary terms, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimated that in 2024, the 27 major weather and climate disasters resulted in about \$182.7 billion in damages. (Source: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2024-active-year-us-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters>). The current federal administration is not allowing NOAA to update these numbers for 2025 and 2026, but it is very likely they are even higher. That figure doesn't even touch on the costs associated with damages to the natural environment, health care, or supply chain interruptions. Nor does it include how much it would cost to prevent such destruction from occurring again through climate adaptation efforts. After all, such events are increasingly commonplace, and the lengthy and expensive process of rebuilding, along with infrastructure improvements to attempt to minimize future damage, now falls on the shoulders of state and local governments and, of course, the taxpaying public.

This is why at least eleven states introduced Make Polluters Pay bills in 2025, and still more will do so in 2026. Leaders in those states are fully aware of the backlash the two early adopter states (Vermont and New York) face from the current federal administration and the fossil fuel industry, given the billions of dollars at stake. However, they tell us they have no choice but to find viable ways to pay for the enormous costs of protecting and repairing infrastructure that was harmed by increasing wildfires, floods, lethal heat domes, and other climate-related events and disasters.

I have three more points to make:

1. Make Polluter Pay laws are not punitive. Instead, they serve to correct an historic disconnect where taxpayers and state and local governments end up paying for the financial consequences of climate pollution caused by fossil fuel companies.
2. All the lawsuits challenging Make Polluters Pay laws claim that they intrude onto federal affairs. This is a bogus claim. These state laws do not regulate greenhouse gas emissions. They simply allocate some portion of the costs of funding local infrastructure to the largest fossil fuel producers. They don't conflict with federal air pollution laws. The courts have long recognized the traditional power of states to enact laws that protect the health, safety, and financial well-being of their citizens.

3. The fossil fuel industry is working hard to advance the narrative that these laws will increase the cost of living for all, and somehow particularly harm the most vulnerable populations. This claim is also false. We know that the oil and gas markets are dictated by global supply and demand forces, and will not be impacted by state laws such as this. These laws will impact the profits of the largest polluting companies since they will finally be held partially accountable for the environmental damage and health costs they caused. In fact, the funds received will provide much needed relief for the most vulnerable populations. In the case of Oregon's bill, 30% of the funds in the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery

Account will go to wildfire prevention, while 40% of the remaining funds will go to support frontline communities most impacted by climate change. That seems quite reasonable.

Please vote YES on 1541.