

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

I strongly encourage passage of SB 1541 to create a Climate Resilience fund.

As taxpayers and as individual families, we are all paying for the costs of disasters such as floods, wildfires, drought, and heat waves. Some of us have lost homes, some have lost crops, some have lost home insurance, some have lost family members. But the companies that sold the products that caused all this are making huge profits. This isn't right.

My brother-in-law's home unbelievably survived a devastating fire that included a fire-tornado. Yet the rest of their town burned down. Their formerly beautiful view is now charred trunks and soil that was burned so badly that it has taken years for anything to regrow. Consequently, while they are grateful that the house survived, their home value has dropped dramatically and their insurance premium has soared.

As fossil fuel use drives more extreme weather, we are fully exposed to the rising costs of emergency services, fire response, heating and cooling shelters, flood control, water resources and more. All the while, large fossil fuel producers pay nothing while making record profits.

Oregon's fiscal state is dire, and that trickles down to cities and counties. All of these are bearing the costs of disasters. Budgets are overstretched and services are being reduced everywhere. This bill provides a mechanism to offset some of that stress by infusion of much needed funding.

SB 1541 would charge DLCD with developing a Climate Adaptation Plan and with determining which megacorporations have caused the crisis by selling fossil fuels when they knew decades ago that the results would be disastrous. In fact, these corporations used the same tactics as the tobacco companies had to deny, delay and divert any attempts to develop low-carbon fuel sources. DEQ would assess proportional charges to be paid into a Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program Account.

This fund would pay for wildfire prevention, community fire hardening (similar to the work that saved our family's home), improved water resources, community protection from heat waves, flood protection, addressing droughts impact on drinking water and irrigation, upgrades to transportation infrastructure (such as culverts for flood prevention), protection of electric power grids from wildfire, waste-water treatment systems threatened by sea level rise, addressing ocean acidity to protect fisheries,

and building retrofits.

Other states (notably NY and VT) have enacted a similar law. This bill is based on the simple and long-standing premise that those who inflict damage on a community must pay for correcting that loss. It is based on the CERCLA law that created the federal Superfund. It is also morally right. If you mess it up, you need to help fix it!

Please vote for and advocate for passage of this important bill. Thanks for your work for Oregon!

My name is Joseph Stenger MD. I am on the Steering Committee for MCAT, Mobilizing Climate Action Together. We are a community of experienced volunteers who help steward significant greenhouse gas reduction policy into state law and advocate for an expanding green economy here in Oregon.