



Date: February 6, 2026  
To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire  
From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503  
RE: Support for SB 1541

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

My name is Mike Powers, and I represent SEIU Local 503. Our Union represents more than 70,000 workers in every county in Oregon, including public sector employees, first responders, and care providers in homes and facilities. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1541, which establishes the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program.

At its most basic, climate change is just chemistry and physics. The more carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide we put in the air, the more that air heats up. It's a law of nature. The warming causes more extreme weather. Such events are becoming more frequent and more severe. These rising disasters threaten agriculture, infrastructure, and local economies.

SB 1541 creates a fair and practical solution. It follows the model of the federal Superfund law by allowing the state to recover climate damages from the largest fossil fuel producers and refiners—companies whose emissions have increased the severity of wildfires, droughts, extreme heat, and other disasters.

### **Protecting Communities, Landowners, and First Responders**

This legislation directly supports wildfire prevention, resilience, and community safety. At least 30% of funds would be dedicated to wildfire prevention and response. That investment would help:

- Reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health
- Support defensible space and home hardening for landowners
- Strengthen power lines and critical infrastructure
- Invest in nature-based solutions that reduce fire risk
- Improve emergency planning and community preparedness

These investments help landowners and rural communities reduce wildfire risk before disasters happen, lowering the intensity and scale of fires. This is critical for protecting our firefighters and first responders, who face longer fire seasons and increasingly dangerous conditions. When landscapes are healthier and communities are prepared, emergency responders can do their jobs more safely and effectively.

**1-844-503-SEIU**  
MAIN OFFICE

**525 NE OREGON ST.**  
PORTLAND, OR 97232

**@SEIU503**  
FACEBOOK  
INSTAGRAM  
BLUESKY  
TWITTER

**SEIU503.ORG**

Oregon's wildfire costs alone reached **at least \$352 million in 2024**, and those costs are expected to grow rapidly as climate change worsens.

### **Why Fossil Fuel Companies Can Afford to Pay**

SB 1541 is based on a simple principle: the polluters who created the damage should help pay to fix it.

Major fossil fuel companies have earned extraordinary profits in recent years. For example:

- Big Oil earned a record profit of nearly \$200 billion in 2022 alone<sup>1</sup>.
- In 2024 the five big oil companies earned more than \$102 billion in profit<sup>2</sup>
- And some data show that the oil and gas industry has earned well over \$2 billion a day in profit over the past 50 years<sup>3</sup>

While studies may vary, it seems clear that oil and gas companies have the financial capacity to contribute to climate resilience and mitigation. Meanwhile, Oregon taxpayers are paying the bill through higher wildfire suppression costs, infrastructure repairs, and disaster recovery.

The fossil fuel industry often claims these policies will raise the cost of living. But oil and gas prices are set by global markets, not individual state policies. This program simply ensures that Oregon has the resources needed to prepare for the climate challenges ahead.

### **A Smart Investment in Oregon's Future**

SB 1541 requires only \$300,000 in start-up funding, yet it creates a pathway to recover billions in climate damages and invest in resilience across the state. Without this program, Oregon has no realistic strategy to keep up with the rising costs of wildfires, extreme heat, drought, and flooding.

This bill protects communities, supports landowners, strengthens infrastructure, and helps keep our firefighters safe. Most importantly, it ensures that the costs of climate damage are shared fairly.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to support SB 1541.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> [Big Oil rakes in record annual profit, fueling calls for higher taxes](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Energy Profits | History-making profits. World-ending emissions.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Revealed: oil sector's 'staggering' \\$3bn-a-day profits for last 50 years | Fossil fuels | The Guardian](#)