

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

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

As I write this testimony today on the central Oregon coast about SB 1541 Climate Resilience Superfund, the day is sunny, warm, and there is not a cloud in the sky. As we all know, we have had a very dry winter. The Oregon Cascade snowpack is less than 50%. Right now, the ski resorts are hurting financially. As I look forward to the summer months, I would not be surprised if we have a repeat of the 2020 wildfire season which devastated a number of Oregon towns such as Blue River, Mill City, Phoenix, and Otis. Why should the State Legislature consider this bill? • In 2024 alone, climate-fueled wildfires burned nearly 2 million acres and cost Oregon over \$350 million. • The economic ripple effects of smoke-related health issues and lost productivity are estimated to cost Oregon up to \$1 billion in GDP during heavy smoke years. • The 2021 heat dome caused 102 deaths (with heat as the sole cause), and is estimated at \$1.3 billion in costs. Patterned after successful bills in New York and Vermont, the Climate Resilience Superfund Act would establish a comprehensive program to assess damages and collect billions of dollars from major polluters: multinational oil and gas corporations who contributed at least a billion metric tons of CO₂e from 1995–2024. At least 30% of funds are allocated to the fire marshall for wildfire resilience. The other 70% are administered by the Department of Land Conservation and Development, with a requirement that at least 40% of those funds are directed to communities on the front lines of climate change. Please forgive for saying this, but I doubt very much that this bill will pass. The Oregon State Legislature has had a very poor record in passing useful environmental legislation for the last few sessions. In one sense, I do not blame elected officials. According to several studies, 50% of all Americans read and comprehend at the sixth grade level. One can not have a functioning democracy without an educated public. In addition to passing the tipping point for climate change, we have also passed the tipping point for have an educated public able to make intelligent decisions about both our environment and our democracy.