



**Tom Chamberlain**, *President*  
**Barbara Byrd**, *Secretary-Treasurer*

3645 SE 32nd Ave,  
Portland, OR 97202  
[www.oraficio.org](http://www.oraficio.org)

503-232-1195

[afl-cio@oraficio.org](mailto:afl-cio@oraficio.org)

## **Testimony for May 17, 2017 Informational Hearing on Labor's Perspective on Climate Policy**

Thank you, Chair Helm, Chair Dembrow and members of both committees. My name is Barbara Byrd, and I'm the Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO, which represents 140,000 union members in our state. I'm grateful for the opportunity to testify today with my colleagues about labor's perspective on climate policy.

In 2008, the Oregon AFL-CIO adopted a labor position on climate policy. It opened with a statement committing the organization and its affiliated unions to the goal of dealing with climate change in a way that guarantees economic growth and equity.

At that time, we stated our belief that climate policy should be tied strategically to economic development goals and offer opportunities to create good jobs with a future – jobs that are paid a decent wage and that offer pathways into higher paid positions. We also called for

- Investing revenues from carbon pricing policies into clean energy solutions and infrastructure;
- Flexibility to protect Oregon's manufacturing sector against leakage;
- The creation of a fund to provide transition assistance – as a last resort – to any workers whose jobs are impacted;
- The use of high standards for construction work associated with climate mitigation and adaptation, and the use of registered apprenticeship programs to train workers for the renewable and energy efficiency industries;
- Equitable treatment for our communities that have been adversely impacted by climate change or might be affected by higher electricity prices;
- Adequate monitoring to inform policy updates;

- And finally, for a worker voice to be incorporated into advisory and oversight bodies associated with climate programs.

Our position on these issues has remained consistent, informed both by subsequent research findings and by on-going conversations with partners in the environmental, business and environmental justice realms. We were gratified that some of our ideas were incorporated into SB 557 and HB 2135.

Today we've organized a panel that represents the best thinking on labor's positions on climate policy. You'll hear from a representative of the United Steelworkers union, which has done important work on behalf of manufacturing workers, advocating for policies that reduce carbon emissions while maximizing job creation and job security.

You'll also hear from the head of Oregon's Building and Construction Trades Council, speaking to the job creation opportunities in the renewable and energy efficiency sectors, and emphasizing the need for an approach that uses revenue strategically to employ skilled workers at a decent wage, and allocates work to responsible contractors.

Finally, you'll hear about research documenting the jobs impact of a cap and trade policy that, as you know, has been in effect in California for several years. While California is certainly not Oregon, we believe that there are lessons in their experience that are relevant and important to us here, including attention to less urban parts of the state.

Because of time constraints, you won't hear other labor voices –

- nurses whose concern about the public health impacts of climate change have led their union to support climate policy initiatives;
- teachers from kindergarten through college who educate our young people about the science of climate change; and state, county and local employees who work to implement environmental policies that are already on the books;
- public transit workers, whose jobs are part of the solution to the climate crisis
- and rural workers, for whom the creation of even a handful of higher-paying jobs can make a big difference

These workers – many of whom are active in their respective unions – also provide important pieces of labor’s perspective on this issue.

You also won’t hear - today, at least - from our partners in communities of color and low-income communities, whose interest in this work relates both to protecting their neighborhoods from environmental hazards as well as gaining access to good jobs in clean energy and energy efficiency. We support their work and have had fruitful conversations about our mutual interests.

Before I wrap up, I want to add that for me personally, the past 10 years of doing this work has involved a very steep learning curve. Though I still would never claim expertise in the technical issues involved, I’ve had the good fortune to meet the folks who ARE experts, and to learn from them. In 2007, the Oregon AFL-CIO first convened the Oregon Apollo Alliance, which brought together labor, environmentalists, business and social justice groups to identify and work on our common interests. The relationships we built then and have continued to work on within what is now the Oregon BlueGreen Alliance have been key to our developing ideas on climate policy. We’ve learned a lot from each other over the years.

Let me conclude by repeating my thanks for this opportunity. The Oregon AFL-CIO is ready to continue to be part of the conversation about climate policy that will protect existing jobs and create the basis for job growth.

I’d be happy to take questions now or after all the panelists have spoken. Thank you.