

Oregon House of Representatives
Committee on Rules

Testimony concerning HB 4167

February 19, 2020

Chairman Holvey and committee members;

I speak on behalf of my family and in support of HB 4167, Oregon's Cap and Invest legislation. We are forestland owners in Douglas County.

The principal objections raised against the bill are that it inflicts economic harm, fails to deliver adequate benefits, and increases regulation.

HB 4167 imposes a tax, but claims made by opponents of tax payer cost and gas price increase are exaggerated and false. For example, in California there has been no gas price increase attributable to their cap and trade program.

Similarly, claims that the revenue received will not benefit Oregonians generally, and rural communities specifically, are mistaken, as the Fiscal Impact of Proposed Legislation statement A-Revised for SB 1530, which HB 4167 incorporates, makes clear.

In fact, the benefits are large, strategic, and progressive. For example, multiple pathways including direct allocations to a Just Transitions Fund for exposed and disadvantaged communities, to Indian Tribes, and allocations to local governments, to the Oregon Department of Forestry for mitigating forest fires, to the Oregon Department of Transportation which then allocates 90% to county governments and to the Oregon Common School Fund are provided.

In addition, a \$10M fund to be operated by the Oregon Business Development Department to provide low or no interest loans to “. . . emissions-intensive trade exposed facilities, to finance projects or upgrades that will lead to reduction in greenhouse gas emissions” is included.

An allocation to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is directed at natural and working lands.

Managed well, Oregon's farm and forest lands have the capacity to decarbonize the state. Think about this. It means that rural Oregon would be a net carbon sink. All Oregonians could be proud and our Cap and Invest program will be an important contributor.

Opponents of HB 4167 provide no credible alternative that addresses the crisis now engulfing us.

If we had starting reducing our CO₂ emissions when Al Gore lost the election for the presidency, a reduction rate of 3% per year would have kept us safely below two degrees C of temperature rise. Implemented today, the rate would have to be 10% per year. If we lose the next decade, it will be 30% per year.

Even if we stop the increase at 2 degrees C, now almost certainly out of reach, we would have 500 ppm CO₂ or more in the atmosphere. The last time that was the case, the temperature rise wasn't two degrees higher, it was five to eight, or higher.

At three degrees C of increase, southern Europe is in continual drought and forest fires in the US occur six time more often, or more. ⁽¹⁾

In 1982, three years after publication of the Charney Report, the US Government's summary assessment of all information and analyses produced up to that time, Exxon oil scientists predicted that by the 21st century atmospheric CO₂ would reach 415 ppm, which it now has done (<https://www.democraticunderground.com/100212098512>), and is in agreement with the Charney report (<https://phys.org/news/2019-07-charney-years-scientists-accurately-climate.html>).

Since then, the argument over the validity of the risk has never been an honest discussion concerning the accuracy of the science nor what prudent response, even if there was uncertainty about the science, would mean.

The delays created by the campaign against action have left us with no gentle, business as usual, future. All that is left to us now are emergency declarations and desperate struggles to survive. Yes, it means that we rely on our ability to organize action through elected governments, to express them in law, and to pay taxes.

Last year, in response to fires in prior years, Pacific Gas and Electric Company shut down large portions of its grid in California, an event for which citizens, institutions, businesses, and agencies were unprepared. Increasingly, the actions remaining available to us to prevent disruption are themselves disruptive.

The entire meaning of having a threshold not to exceed was to prevent a self-reinforcing run away condition. There now is strong evidence that the run away ran away over a decade ago because we failed to act.

With the most severe forms of climate crisis already bearing down on us, for legislators to oppose HB 4167 while at the same time offering no credible alternative isn't merely immoral, its' deadly.

⁽¹⁾ Excerpts are taken from *The Uninhabitable Earth*, David Wallace-Wells, Tim Duggan Books, 2019.

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