

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SJM 5 URGING CONGRESS TO ENACT BIPARTISAN CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION

Submitted by Walt Mintkeski, February 23, 2021

Senator Byers and members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SJR 5 and the -1 Amendments proposed by Senator Dembrow.

I am Walt Mintkeski, from Portland 97202 in Multnomah County, where I have lived since 1974. My career as an Oregon Registered Professional Engineer was designing and supervising the construction of municipal drinking water and wastewater treatment plants. I retired from that work in 2004 to pursue solar energy and energy efficiency. My work for Energy Trust of Oregon and Triple Point Energy from 2008 to 2015 involved developing energy efficiency projects for municipal treatment plants. It was very satisfying work, except for those times when clients would tell me that they would not implement the project which I proposed because the energy savings did not pay back the cost of the project soon enough.

That is when it occurred to me that energy prices are artificially low because the prices of fossil fuels do not reflect the true social and environmental costs of creating that energy. Toxins and micron sized particles created by combusting fossil fuels are discharged at no cost into the air we breathe and cause public health problems such as asthma and cancer. Carbon dioxide and methane emissions exacerbate changes in our Oregon climate, such as less snow pack, more severe flooding, and more damaging wildfires.

However, about 6 years ago I discovered a concept called Carbon Fee and Dividend which can help solve these problems resulting from improperly priced fossil fuels. It was as if a lightbulb went on in my brain. The concept involves putting a gradually increasing price on carbon fuels as they are removed from the ground or imported into the US. It would start at \$15/ton of equivalent carbon dioxide emissions, and increase \$10/ ton/year until national CO2 emissions are reduced down to 10% of 2016 levels. The predictable price increase over 20 to 30 years will provide the economic signal to business and industry to innovate energy efficiency and implement renewable energy projects. The revenue from the fees would be put in a dedicated trust fund and returned as a monthly dividend check to all taxpayers to spend as they need, whether it be for gasoline, rent, health care, food, utilities, etc. Since low-income households have low carbon footprints, over 90% will receive more money in the dividend check than they will see in increased costs of energy, goods, and services.

In 2019, this concept was introduced in Congress as the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, and will be reintroduced soon into the current session of Congress by its original sponsor Rep. Ted Deutch of Florida. I want to emphasize that this bill is not the silver bullet to address carbon emissions. Rather, it is part of the silver buckshot needed to bring down CO2 emissions to sustainable levels (10% of 2016 emissions).

Your Committee worked long and hard on HB 2020 and SB 1530 to cap carbon emissions from large emitters and invest the fees from emission permits in projects for communities most impacted by the changing climate. The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act legislation, when implemented on the Federal level, will provide the price signal on fossil fuels which will

accelerate the achievement of the CO2 reduction goals in the proposed Oregon legislation. Therefore, I urge you to move SJR 5 with the -1 Amendments to the Senate with a do pass recommendation. The US Congress needs to hear your voices urging them to take action on The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of SJR 5 with the -1 Amendments.