

HB 4083 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Prepared By: Beverly Schoonover, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Encourages the Oregon Investment Council and the State Treasurer to make efforts to eliminate certain investments in thermal coal companies and funds.

Detailed Summary

This measure directs the Oregon Investment Council and the State Treasurer to try to ensure that Oregon Public Employee Retirement Funds (OPERF) are not invested in thermal coal companies, or any fund containing a thermal coal company.

- Defines thermal coal companies as a company, parent or subsidiary of a company that derives at least 20 percent of its annual revenue from thermal coal production; accounts from more than one percent of global production of thermal coal; or whose coal reserves contains more than 0.3 gigatons of potential carbon dioxide emissions.
- Allows use of the Urgewald Global Coal Exit List to identify thermal coal companies with these criteria.
- Provides that divestments and reinvestments under this measure must be accomplished without monetary loss to the investment funds.
- Directs the Council and State Treasurer to make reasonable efforts to investigate all companies in which the State Treasury has invested, or may invest, OPERF funds to determine whether any of those companies are thermal coal companies.
- Directs the State Treasurer to provide notice they will withdraw funds if it is determined they are investing in a publicly traded thermal coal company, for as long as the company is a thermal coal company.
- Allows the Treasurer to retain an investment in a thermal coal company if they demonstrate they are transitioning to clean energy withing a reasonable timeline. Allows the Council to adopt rules to define a reasonable timeline.
- Requires the State Treasurer to monitor thermal coal companies transitioning to clean energy to ensure the company is on track with meeting emissions goals.
- Allows the Treasurer to consult with managers of public employee pension funds in California and New York regarding thermal coal companies from which they have divested.
- Requires an annual report to the Legislative Assembly on actions taken pursuant to this Act; concludes annual reporting requirement until no moneys from OPERF are invested in thermal coal companies.

Applies certain provisions only if the Legislative Assembly appropriates sufficient moneys to the State Treasurer other than payment of the expense of State Treasurer (ORS 293.718) or OPERF funds. Disallows OPERF funding to be used to pay for administration costs for certain provisions in the measure.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon State Treasury is charged with fiduciary responsibility for managing investments for several large funds, including OPERF, the Industrial Accident Fund, the Consumer and Business Services Fund, among others.

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

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The Oregon Investment Council oversees the investment and allocation of all State of Oregon trust funds, including OPERF. Council members are appointed by the Governor and establish investment policies, asset allocation, risk levels, and targeted returns.

Fossil fuel disinvestment is a strategy to encourage institutions to move their investments out of oil, coal and gas companies and funds. Thermal coal is a grade of coal used in electric power plants to generate steam or create electricity. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), while coal is an abundant fuel source that is relatively inexpensive to produce into energy, coal combustion creates emissions of environmental concern including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and carbon dioxide. EIA estimates that in 2021, carbon dioxide emissions from burning coal for energy accounted for about 20 percent of total U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions and for nearly 60 percent of total carbon dioxide emissions from the electric power sector.