

Submitter: Carroll Johnston

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB726

I strongly support the use of advanced methane detection technology to monitor landfills as described in SB 726. It is long overdue.

The impact of climate change caused by strong greenhouse gases such as methane cannot be overemphasized, and the totally inadequate detection methods used by landfill operators in Oregon to date have been demonstrably inadequate. For example, recent testing by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the Coffin Butte Landfill near Corvallis have demonstrated dangerous and even potentially explosive levels of methane leaking from that landfill that were not reported by the Landfill operators. I have seen with my own eyes the vegetation growing from obvious rips in the cover that was supposed to prevent the methane from leaking. Some areas of the landfill are too steep for safely conducting conventional detection inspections on foot; but advanced detection technology, such as drones or satellites, can surveil all of the hard-to-monitor locations. The advanced technology can also be used more frequently to detect leaks that are currently missed between inspections on foot and can also detect leaks from the working face of the landfills.

Increased surveillance provided by advanced detection technology will not only help reduce climate change in the long run, but will also in the short run help protect people in the surrounding community from the numerous other toxic gases, such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and PFAS that accompany the methane coming from landfill leaks. It is very important for the health of those people that the leaks be detected and repaired as quickly as possible. It would also be desirable for greater efforts to be made to prevent gases from leaking from the working face of landfills. Data collected by advanced detection technology will make this need even more evident so other protective rules can be developed, such as limiting the surface area of the working face at landfills and adding impermeable cover over the working face sooner than the months or years that are seen in practice currently.

It is also important that leaks be reported to Oregon DEQ in a timely manner and that DEQ has and applies the necessary enforcement powers to induce compliance by landfill operators. Please pass SB 726.