

Submitter: Rachel Freed
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR28

I am writing to express my opposition to SJR 28, which proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to establish a fundamental right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment. While the intent of this amendment is commendable, I believe it raises significant concerns that warrant careful consideration.

Firstly, the broad and subjective nature of the terms "clean," "safe," and "healthy" makes it difficult to implement and enforce this amendment effectively. Defining these terms within a legal framework could lead to confusion, legal disputes, and potential misuse of the amendment in ways that may not align with the original intent. This ambiguity could result in unintended consequences, including increased litigation and regulatory burdens that could hinder economic development and growth in our communities.

Secondly, embedding such a right in our state constitution may create challenges for existing environmental regulations and policies. Oregon has made significant strides in environmental protection through legislation and regulatory frameworks. However, adding a constitutional amendment could complicate these existing efforts, leading to conflicts and inefficiencies in governance that may ultimately slow progress in addressing environmental issues.

Moreover, the proposed amendment could impose additional financial burdens on taxpayers. Enforcing a constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment could necessitate new programs and initiatives that require substantial funding, potentially diverting resources from other critical areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Furthermore, while the intention is to protect the environment, we must recognize the importance of balancing environmental protection with economic development. A rigid constitutional amendment could limit our ability to adapt to changing circumstances and respond effectively to the needs of our communities. We should strive for solutions that promote sustainable practices while also supporting economic growth and job creation.

In conclusion, while I wholeheartedly agree on the importance of protecting our environment, I believe that SJR 28 is not the right approach. I urge you to reconsider this proposed amendment and explore alternative methods that promote environmental stewardship without the complexities and potential drawbacks of constitutional changes.