

Unreasonable Demands from the Current Structure

Testimony of Philip H. Carver, Ph.D.

Date submitted: March 25, 2025

Before the Senate Rules Committee

In support of SJR 28-1

For the hearing of March 26, 2025

Greetings Chair Jama and members and staff of the committee

I noted in earlier testimony that the current structure for regulating toxins in the environment is broken. Here I note that it is particularly broken for adults aged 18 to 45 and especially for children.

At a meeting held last week by the Water Resources Dept., it was noted that there were 512 bills that the department was following related to water. For this session there were also 342 land use bills, many of these related to farm/forest protection. There were also several hundred environmental bills not related to these bills. So more than a quarter of the 3,400 bills in the OLIS system are related to environmental threats to health and safety. It is extremely difficult for even full-time lobbyists to track all these bills.

For a young adult getting a post-high school education and job training, raising a young family and/or working to earn a living, tracking the Oregon legislative process is nearly impossible. Helping to lobby against unfavorable environmental bills or supporting bills to protect health and safety is even more difficult.

Yet, this is the current structure for protecting health and safety: reacting only after environmental harm is occurring and there is a political movement to stop it. That's not a feasible system where young adults can protect themselves. This is the group that faces the second highest level of environmental threats from long-lived toxic pollutants. Lifetime threats to children are even further from being adequately addressed by the current structure.

Fifty-five percent of Oregonians are under the age of 45! Younger Oregonians are facing the most direct threat from these long-lived pollutants.

The current structure provides very little protection for this population.

The constitutional amendment of SJR 28-1 would provide a more reasonable structure to address the needs of this population. SJR 28-1 would change things for the better, in a fair and equitable way that would offer protection to the health and safety of all Oregonians from environmental threats.

SJR 28 would provide a clear, constitutional standard which informs all else. With a bright line rule in the Oregon Constitution, Oregonians would be able to rest easier knowing that their safety and health comes first before any powerful special interest.