

Submitter: Ken Jones
On Behalf Of: Environment and Oregonians
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR28

Dear Chair Senator Jama, Vice-Chair Senator Bonham and Committee on Rules members:

Thank you for this chance to give you my point of view about this very important, rare chance to move the state in the direction of modernizing the Oregon Constitution's Bill of Rights. Not many read the State Constitution, but I have only been in the state for a few years and decided I finally should. It is striking that there are 46 sections of rights that are enumerated in Article 1- the Bill of Rights. Section 1 Natural Rights Inherent in People starts off saying that "all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness."

So, it references, right at the beginning, that people have the power so, clearly, the people need to be allowed to express that power by establishing what they want if they believe something is missing in their Constitution. Sending this out to the people to vote on is absolutely required. That first section in that quote also says it is "their peace, safety, and happiness" that needs to be the focus. Well, there are 45 further sections of rights and none of them focus on the environment or even the air we breathe or water we drink in the state that keeps us safe and healthy. Can a people be happy without clean water to drink and air to breathe, or a climate that has been made increasingly inhospitable? SJR 28 - The Right to a Healthy Environment, will add a very necessary addition to the Bill of Rights.

It seems strange to me that people have for so long been living in Oregon, or coming to Oregon to live, because of how wonderful the environment is here and that is not a focus in the Constitution. We, as citizens of this state, need to have the chance to establish this as a right because it is something that we are seeing devalued by those who use the environment for personal or corporate profit. I think we can agree we even now have a federal government that is also devaluing it. It is time we have something strongly stated in the Constitution to help those who are doing business here or want to, or who just want to live with us, know that they must value what Oregonians value. It is what makes Oregon special.

Thank you,

An Oregonian that Cares