

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Rules
Testimony in Support of SJR 28
Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee. I am representing *Third Act Oregon*; an all-volunteer community of Oregonians determined to protect our planet and democracy for our children and grandchildren.

I SUPPORT SJR 28.

I write today as a lifelong social worker, teacher, researcher, and grandmother of 5. I am also a granddaughter of one of Oregon's first US Forest Service supervisors, who dedicated his adult life to protecting Oregon's forests.

As you consider the proposed amendment today, I ask you to think about young Oregonians.

While my childhood memories are of clean air, healthy forests, bountiful waters, and glimmering mountains, young people today – including my twin one-year-old grandchildren in Portland – may have memories of fires, polluted waters, smog, and floods.

Young people will ask – they ARE asking – why do we let this happen.

They are watching what we do to turn this around. Will they feel they are being protected? Just as important: Will they be invested in the democratic institutions that are so important in solving critical challenges?

I believe this depends on whether and how we meet today's environmental challenges. This will take bold steps on the part of lawmakers and the public.

SJR 28 is one of those steps. The proposed amendment will establish that “***all people, including children and future generations, have the inherent fundamental right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment.***” The amendment – like all constitutional amendments – establishes a fundamental principle and outlines the duties of government to protect certain rights to the people. This amendment makes **explicit** in our constitution the responsibility of state and local governments to protect Oregonians from human-caused environmental harm.

Oregon is not alone in this endeavor. Other states—including Hawai'i, Montana, Pennsylvania, and New York—already have enshrined the right to a healthy environment in their constitutions.

With SJR 28, it is more likely that we will make decisions that protect health and safety. Without it, young people (and future) generations may feel betrayed. It is time to protect the right to a healthy environment as one of Oregon's basic human rights.

Thank you for your attention and for your service to this great state.