

Submitter: Andy Harris
On Behalf Of: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR28

I support SJR 28-1 on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility and my 7 grandchildren, whose health I care about deeply, not to mention the health of their children and grandchildren.

So why do we need a constitutional amendment to assure a healthy environment? Existing environmental regulations contain loopholes that continue to allow pollution that is detrimental to our health.

In the 50 years that I have lived in Oregon, the air and water quality have deteriorated significantly. The Oregon Constitution needs an update to reflect the threats posed by toxic pollutants in our air, water and soil and by climate change, - problems that were unknown when the Oregon constitution was written.

National data indicate that Oregon's asthma mortality rate is twice as high as the national average. A chief cause of asthma is nitrous oxides from diesel trucks and cars.

Nitrates from fertilizers and confined animal feed operations have polluted streams, rivers and aquifers, causing blue baby syndrome, birth defects, cancer and thyroid disorders.

CO2 and other greenhouse gases are heating the planet and causing severe storms, flooding, droughts and wildfires.

Oregon currently depends heavily on federal environmental laws including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These environmental laws and the EPA are threatened by the new administration as it pushes back against effective environmental protections.

Finally, there is no fiscal impact to referring SJR 28-1 to the voters to decide whether this Right to a Healthy Environment should be added to Oregon's other Bill of Rights. Improving the health of Oregonians will in fact save precious healthcare dollars.

Thank you.

Andy Harris, MD