

Submitter:

Pia Allabastro

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SJR28

I am writing in SUPPORT of legislation to amend the Oregon state constitution to enshrine the right to a safe and healthy environment to all Oregonians. I am aware of similar Constitutional amendments in other states, including Montana and Hawaii which have subsequently led to positive changes in policies and in practice that reduce pollution and improve both air and water quality in those states. Oregon is known for it's abundant natural spaces and for being a leader in climate change. Making it a constitutional right for every citizen in our state to have a safe and healthy environment will make it clear to our local and state governments that they have a mandate to uphold best practices with regards to the environment and to withstand outside influence from special interests and big corporations. Avoiding pollution in the first place avoids all of the costly downstream effects from environmental clean-ups on the land itself to long -term healthcare costs from diseases caused by, associated with, or made worse by environmental toxins. This amendment will be a pro-active, instead of a reactive, response saving us both money and heartache.

The current Trump administration is dismantling our federal government in the name of returning power to the states. The gutting of federal agencies and the withholding of federal funds means that programs designed to protect citizens from environmental harm will no longer be as effective. Oregon's currently regulatory system relies on federal environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. These bedrock environmental laws are in jeopardy with the Trump administration's exposed views. At the same time, corporations (often from out of state or even out the country) have become too powerful and all too easily sidestep or disregard policies designed to limit toxins and pollution at the expense of the health and welfare of local citizens. It is now up to individual states to take the lead and protect their citizens. Oregon, with it's reputation for being environmentally friendly, should stand up with states like Montana and Hawaii to insure that it's citizens, now and in the future, have a safe and healthy environment by making it a constitutional right. Protecting Oregon and Oregonians should be the highest priority of our government. This amendment does just that.