



Daniel Scotton  
Executive Director  
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

March 24th, 2025

Testimony supporting SJR 28

Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

My name is Daniel Scotton and I am writing as Executive Director of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now. SOCAN is a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it.

I am testifying today in strong support of SJR 28, as it represents a chance for the citizens of Oregon to vote on a ballot measure which would allow us to unequivocally state Oregonians want the Right to a Healthy Environment.

SJR 28 provides:

- A. Proactive public health protection, in our current system we address health impacts after the fact; SJR 28 is necessary to provide a constitutional authority to address environmental threats before harm manifests;
- B. It recognizes the Public Trust Doctrine, on which our social contract relies, and asserts that the government at all levels bears an explicit duty to protect common natural resources; and
- C. Finally, it acknowledges that the burden of environmental harm should not fall on the public; egregious polluters, acting in self interest, must be held accountable for the externalities they produce while chasing surplus capital.

Permit me to indulge in a bit of poetics. There was a time — not so long ago, though it feels like a different world — when Oregon's air was crisp, its waters clear, its forests vast and unbroken. When the state's constitution was first written, pollution wasn't yet a threat on the horizon. The settler communities who crossed the Rockies arrived to find an ecosystem that appeared endless in its abundance. Timber was just beginning to fall. Cattle herds were just beginning to form. And words like "forever chemicals" hadn't yet entered our collective vocabulary.

Back then, there was no need to spell out a right to a clean environment — it was the default. But that default is long gone.

We live now in a time where every generation carries its own toxic legacy. My grandfather breathed asbestos. My father's cells carried lead. And me? I have microplastics in my bloodstream — all of which are the silent inheritance of industrial excess. What once was taken for granted must now be defended with intention.

Just because the land was once plentiful doesn't mean we're entitled to its endless extraction. Just because it wasn't written then doesn't mean it shouldn't be written now.

This is the moment to correct course — before the last leaf falls.

SOCAN urges your support for SJR 28.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Scotton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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