

Submitter: David Herasimtschuk  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR28

To the Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is David Herasimtschuk, and I am a resident of Benton County. I write today in strong support of SJR-28, the proposed amendment to Oregon's state constitution that would guarantee every Oregonian the right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment. This amendment is not just a policy measure, it is a defining commitment to the well-being of current and future generations in the face of growing environmental uncertainty.

As an ecologist, photographer and science communicator, I have spent years documenting the intricate connections between Oregon's forests, rivers, and the species that depend on them. While we have made tremendous strides in protecting these ecosystems, the persistent stress of anthropogenic impacts undermine these efforts. I have witnessed firsthand how these landscapes, so vital to the health of our environment and communities, are being pushed to their limits. Without stronger protections, we risk losing not only the rich biodiversity that defines Oregon but also the essential ecosystem services that sustain us all.

#### The Uncertainty of Climate Change

Right now, we are witnessing the accelerating effects of environmental instability. Each year, we are reminded that the systems we once relied on, our water sources, forests, and agricultural lands, are increasingly vulnerable. We do not yet know the full extent of the disruptions climate change will bring, but we do know this: Without a firm foundation that protects our right to a healthy environment, we leave ourselves exposed to greater risks, increased instability, and deepening inequities.

#### Public Health, Economy, and Environmental Justice

Environmental degradation is not an abstract issue, it has immediate and tangible impacts on public health. As wildfires become more severe, the risk to communities grows exponentially. Contaminated drinking water and air pollution disproportionately affect low-income and rural communities, deepening existing inequalities. The health of Oregonians should not be subject to shifting policies, industry influence or political cycles, it should be a constitutional right.

Beyond health, our economy is at stake. Oregon's industries, agriculture, fishing, outdoor recreation, and renewable energy, depend on clean water, and stable ecosystems. When our rivers run dry, when our forest burn, when extreme weather devastates crops, it is not just the environment that suffers, it is the backbone of our

economy.

Right now, Oregon lacks explicit constitutional protections for clean air, safe water, and a healthy environment. This means these fundamental rights are left vulnerable to interpretation, subject to the shifting priorities of political leaders and special interests. By enshrining environmental protections in the constitution, we ensure that the health and well-being of Oregonians will not be left to chance.

Bringing this amendment to the ballot is a declaration that we, as a state, value transparency, public involvement, and shared responsibility in shaping our future. It invites the people of Oregon to decide whether we believe that environmental rights should be fundamental and non-negotiable.

### Protecting Oregon's Future

The cost of inaction is too great to ignore. We cannot continue to react to environmental crises after the damage is done, we must build resilience now. We must secure protections that will allow us to adapt to the challenges ahead and ensure that future generations inherit a state where they can breathe clean air, drink safe water, and thrive in a stable climate.

I urge you to support SJR-28 and allow Oregonians to vote on their right to a livable future. This amendment is not just a safeguard, it is an opportunity to define Oregon's legacy as a leader in environmental protection, resilience, and justice.

Sincerely,

?David Herasimtschuk?