



Daniel Scotton
Executive Director
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

April 4th, 2025

Testimony supporting SB1187

Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

My name is Daniel Scotton, and I am writing on behalf of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN), a grassroots climate organization representing over 2,000 engaged Southern Oregonians committed to science-based climate action. I offer this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1187, the Make Polluters Pay Act.

SB 1187 is a long-overdue correction to a system that has too often placed the burden of climate catastrophe on the shoulders of the public, while the largest emitters walk free of consequence. This bill charts a course toward fairness and accountability by ensuring that the industries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions contribute proportionately to the recovery and resilience costs we now bear collectively.

This bill begins to rectify the systematic blame redistribution machine that has been churning its wheels for nearly four decades. It is perhaps common knowledge, and a tired analogy to recognize that major oil companies such as ExxonMobil and British Petroleum discovered the effects of fossil fuel pollution in the late 70's. Instead of beginning to transition away from toxic chemicals, they doubled down, and launched several, decades long marketing and public relations campaigns to both muddy the waters related to the science of climate change, as well as greenwash their actions, or defer blame.

One of the most egregious products of this campaign was when BP introduced the concept of "Carbon Footprint". The Guardian highlights this fact with, "British Petroleum, the second largest non-state owned oil company in the world, with 18,700 gas and service stations worldwide, hired the public relations professionals Ogilvy & Mather to promote the slant that climate change is not the fault of an oil giant, but that of individuals. It's here that British Petroleum, or BP, first promoted and soon successfully popularized the term "carbon footprint" in the early aughts." [1]. As the article describes, the core conceit behind this strategy was to pass off the blame of greenhouse gas emissions to the consumer instead of the producer. It is the individual and their insatiable desire for fuel that is causing the worst effects of climate change. The question is then, "what are you doing to help the planet?" instead of what reasonable restrictions can we place on the largest producers of oil. The Guardian article continues, "The

company unveiled its “carbon footprint calculator” in 2004 so one could assess how their normal daily life – going to work, buying food, and (gasp) traveling – is largely responsible for heating the globe.” [1].

The effect of the weight these large corporations are able to throw around has been felt the world over. Individuals have begun to internalize the guilt that comes from a personal responsibility for the climate. And while in some respects it is important for consumers to be conscious of their purchasing decisions, the imbalance in culpability is palpable.

Wildfire season in Oregon no longer refers to a month—it defines an era. The increasing severity and frequency of fires, droughts, and extreme heat events are not hypothetical future risks, they are already reshaping the lives of everyday Oregonians. And as outlined in the 7th Oregon Climate Assessment by OCCRI, the costs are not just environmental; they are deeply economic and profoundly personal. OCCRI continues, “Wildfire smoke in 2020 reportedly was a major contributor to a 29 percent decrease in grape production in Oregon from 2019 to 2020, and wildfires across the United States in 2020 caused \$3.7 billion in losses to the national wine industry (Beck 2022)” [2, 123]. In the last legislative session, Oregon approved \$218 million dollars to cover the costs of wildfires across the state in 2024 [3].

SB 1187 provides a mechanism to recoup these costs—costs currently borne by taxpayers, small businesses, health care systems, and families. It creates a structured fund to address adaptation, emergency response, infrastructure repair, and public health mitigation, aligning with the findings of the Oregon Climate Action Roadmap which highlighted the feasibility—and necessity—of aggressive action.

This legislation honors the simple principle that those who cause harm should contribute to repairing it. By holding major polluters financially accountable, Oregon takes a critical step toward climate justice, ensuring that frontline communities—rural, low-income, Indigenous, and BIPOC—are no longer left to bear the disproportionate brunt of climate breakdown.

As we face the uncertain terrain ahead, what is most needed is clarity of vision and the courage to act. SB 1187 does both. It asks not for charity, but for accountability. Not for delay, but for urgency. And not for punishment, but for participation in the collective work of restoration.

On behalf of SOCAN and the many Southern Oregonians who have lived through evacuation notices, smoky summers, and rising healthcare bills—we urge your support of SB 1187.

Respectfully,

Daniel Scotton
Ashland, OR
Director@socan.eco
541-890-0504

Sources:

[1] Carrington, Damian. *Big Oil Coined 'Carbon Footprints' to Blame Us for Their Greed. Keep Them on the Hook*. *The Guardian*, 23 Aug. 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/aug/23/big-oil-coined-carbon-footprints-to-blame-us-for-their-greed-keep-them-on-the-hook>.

[2] Fleishman, E., editor. 2025. Seventh Oregon climate assessment. Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. <https://doi.org/10.5399/osu/1181>. Pp 123

[3] Jensen, Alex. "Oregon Lawmakers Approve \$218 Million to Fund Bill From Record-Breaking Wildfire Season." KGW.com, 12 Dec. 2024, <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/politics/oregon-special-session-wildfire-season-cost/283-b4f1d16e-3329-4c08-94a1-14ccff4eb0e6>