



## ENVIRONMENT POLICY BACKGROUNDER AND PLATFORM

Oregon is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and stunning geography, which contribute to both public and private benefit and should be preserved for future generations rather than squandered to meet short-term needs of the current generation. Clean air and water are among our highest priorities and must be protected when making development and economic policies.

Oregon's leaders have generally allowed our state agencies to disregard core environmental protection needs, including the regulation of industrial impacts on air, water and soil. State and federal governments have not adequately addressed the economic impact that environmental policies have had on our communities, particularly with respect to the harvesting of timber and water conflicts among various stakeholders.

Currently, more than two-thirds of the state's largest industrial polluters are operating without valid permits. In many cases, permits are more than 3 decades out of date, and several facilities have gone for decades without inspection by the state. Despite this, in 2017 Oregon legislators defeated a proposal to regulate large-scale industrial polluters that would have addressed this problem<sup>1</sup>. That same Legislature removed the regulatory authority for the state agency responsible for regulating the final cover and structural integrity of landfills--immediately before one of the state's largest regional landfills is scheduled to close at the request of industry<sup>2</sup> (which does not want to be subject to environmental regulation).

A 2016 review by THE OREGONIAN of the state's handling of toxic air quality in Portland found that the agency was "timid, leaderless and consistently influenced by industry interests."<sup>3</sup>

Oregon is the dumping ground for dirty diesel engines and trucks that are banned in California and Washington but are allowed to operate in Oregon<sup>4</sup>. Diesel emissions cause nearly 250 premature deaths in Oregon per year and \$3.5 billion in health care costs and lost productivity.<sup>5</sup> Multnomah

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kgw.com/news/politics/state-denies-1-million-for-cleaner-air-oregon-initiative/453136532>

<sup>2</sup> <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Measures/Overview/SB1036>,  
<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Measures/Exhibits/SB1036>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2016/04/gov\\_kate\\_brown\\_unveils\\_toxic\\_a.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2016/04/gov_kate_brown_unveils_toxic_a.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2015/01/oregon\\_becomes\\_dumping\\_ground.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2015/01/oregon_becomes_dumping_ground.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://portlandtribune.com/sl/210644-65722-diesel-needless-deaths>

County air ranked in the worst 1% of counties nationwide for concentrations of diesel particulate, according to the last EPA National Air Toxics Assessment (December 2015). The same study ranked Portland as the worst city nationwide for respiratory distress and Multnomah County in the worst 2% of U.S. Counties for cancer risk.<sup>6</sup> The State of Washington has invested 20-fold more in diesel clean-up than Oregon since 2002.

While proposals to better regulate industry or to make communities that are negatively impacted by environmental regulations more resilient have stalled at the Oregon Legislature, giveaways to the largest corporations operating in the state have thrived. A 2016 audit of the state's Business Energy Tax Credits Program found that the program, which was initially supposed to cost the state \$160 million but wound up costing more than \$1 billion, gave out as much as \$340 million in tax credits that were fraudulently obtained<sup>7</sup>. Despite this report, no action was taken by the 2017 Legislature to recover these funds.

We propose the following solutions:

- Prioritize core environmental services, including the proper regulation of industrial polluters, diesel emitters, and companies that handle long-term solid waste disposal.
- Provide resources to the Oregon Department of Justice or Bureau of Labor and Industries to claw back tax monies that were fraudulently obtained through the state's Business Energy Tax Credit program.
- Adopt a fee-based system for regulating industrial polluters that includes adequate resources to ensure compliance with terms of permits and consistent with the impacts these industries have on surrounding communities.
- Significantly increase the fines for polluters, including those involved in man-made disasters.
- Require diesel vehicles operating in Oregon to meet the standards adopted by California or Washington, whichever are more stringent.
- Reform Oregon's transportation system to promote multi-modal transportation of people and cargo and increase use of more efficient vehicles, including bicycles and tricycles propelled by human and/or electric power.
- Ban utilities from building any new fossil-fueled power plants in Oregon or to meet load in Oregon.
- Adopt a "carbon tax" in order to discourage the emission of global warming gases, with such tax applying to all global warming gases (not just carbon dioxide).

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment>

<sup>7</sup> <http://sos.oregon.gov/audits/Documents/2016-20.pdf>

- Allow local communities to adopt policies for the purposes of protecting public health, local resources, and quality of life for residents (examples include banning transport of hazardous materials, aerial spraying, etc.).