

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now



Confronting Climate Change

<https://socan.eco>

Reference HB2659

Chair Helm and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources, Land Use and Water:

I write as cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN), an organization of over 2,000 rural Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and urge appropriate statewide action. The mission of SOCAN is to promote awareness and understanding of the science of global warming and its climate chaos consequences and stimulate individual and collective action to address it. Since rural Oregonians occupy the frontlines in experiencing the impact of the drought, shrinking snowpack, wildfires and extreme weather that the climate crisis imposes, we are strongly committed to statewide action.

I write today to oppose HB2659.

For many years climate conscious Oregonians, collaborating with legislators sympathetic to the need for climate action, have been trying to address the shortcoming in the greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy established by the 2007 program established by House Bill 3543. This bill identified the Oregon goal as reducing statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 75% from the 1990 level by 2050.

Unfortunately, largely because the program was purely voluntary, it never managed to achieve the reductions trajectory designated and we remain far short of the needed emissions reductions pathway. Since then, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC 2023) has made it clear that the 2007 reductions trajectory and goal are inadequate to meet our global needs. As a result of these developing concerns, for many years, the same combination of climate conscious Oregonians and sympathetic legislators worked on developing a comprehensive greenhouse gas emissions reduction program. The bills developed from these collaborations progressively improved in their capacity to generate emissions reduction while offering benefits for rural Oregonians and vulnerable communities and addressing a history of social injustice.

Regrettably, opponents of efforts to establish a climate action program in the state that would have allowed Oregon to contribute its fair share to the global emissions reduction effort, consistently mounted campaigns of misinformation and disinformation about the legislative proposals. This carefully orchestrated opposition campaign culminated in anti-democratic walk-outs by those legislators who refused to support climate action in Oregon. These walkouts not only stymied reasonable climate legislation, but also halted action on a wide range of other legislative efforts. The result was a need for additional legislative sessions where the business of Oregonians and the legislature was completed.

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This was the backdrop that led Governor Kate Brown to sign Executive Order 20-04 charging state agencies to develop programs within their authority that would establish a greenhouse gas emissions reduction trajectory consistent with, but a little more stringent than, the 2007 bill. Among the agencies charged with developing such programs was the Department of Land Conservation and Development. One of the proposals developed by that department was the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities program. The procedure that resulted in this program involved a Rulemaking Advisory Committee of 40 members who met nearly a dozen times. This committee contained representatives of some of the same entities that now seek to negate the rules they helped craft (e.g., The League of Oregon Cities, City of Medford).

In developing the rules DLCD staff were very cognizant of the reality of emissions data compiled by the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ 2022). These data show that transportation, at 21.66% of the 61.38 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions among economic sectors in Oregon. Meanwhile, residential and commercial buildings are directly responsible for 20.81% and when direct and indirect emissions are assessed, responsible for some 33.9% of emissions.

It was, therefore, entirely reasonable for DLCD to consider addressing transportation and buildings when developing the rules for their Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities proposal. It is undoubtedly possible that elements of the proposal could be tweaked to enhance the overall effectiveness of the program and diminish unforeseen negative consequences. However, rather than undermining the entire effort, those with objections to elements of the proposal should suggest specific adjustments to those elements needing such. Opposition to HB2659 creates the impression of a group of legislators who lack commitment to seeing Oregon contribute its fair share to global emissions reductions.

We understand that promoting sustainable livable cities means reducing the vehicle miles traveled. Since much of the day-to-day emissions for which each of us is responsible derives from our running local errands, it makes perfectly good sense to seek to promote, in city planning, designs which minimize local driving. This is exactly what the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities plan is all about.

The contribution of urban sprawl to the climate crisis was demonstrated several years ago by Jones and Kammen (2013). They showed how emissions from eastern seaboard city centers and rural areas are consistently lower than those from the suburbs where transportation emissions result in residents contributing emissions up to 3 times that of their city and rural counterparts. Reports from both coasts (San Francisco and Washington DC) by Singh and Milman (2021) and Hudson (2022) indicate how increasing housing density can contribute substantially to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Those opposing the DLCD plan should recall that, during the 2022 election, of the three candidates running for Governor, two staked out positions opposing climate action in Oregon while one - the winner - campaigned on a climate action platform. Governor Tina Kotek won that election by a 3.5% margin over her nearest rival. Voters in Oregon spoke clearly in favor of a chief executive for the state who would place climate action at the forefront of her efforts. Indeed, maintaining agency efforts spawned by Governor Kate Brown's Executive Order 20-04 was one program that candidate Kotek championed vociferously, even as her opponents both pledged to end that program immediately if elected. In addition to the Governor's campaign, Democratic Party candidates across the state ran on platforms that placed climate action at the forefront. The voters of Oregon have spoken. This effort by legislators to abrogate unto themselves authority vested in the Chief Executive and supported by

legislators in both chambers represents an effort to reverse the democratic will of the voters of Oregon expressed in their choice of Governor Kotek as Governor and the Democratic Party as holder of the majority in both chambers.

For these reasons, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now vehemently opposes HB2659 that targets: "any rule adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission in response to Executive Order 20-04 requiring agencies to take action to reduce and regulate greenhouse gas emissions, including rules related to parking mandates, reduced-vehicle areas, transportation planning, electric vehicle infrastructure or housing density." The goals expressed in this effort contradict the will of Oregonian as expressed in the 2022 election.

Respectfully Submitted



Alan Journet

Sources Cited:

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