

## Climate Change and Legislation in Oregon: Q&A with Representative Bailey

How would you describe the current state of climate change legislation in Oregon?



In the state's current economic climate everything we do needs to somehow benefit the economy or job creation.



We aren't at the point where we can frame legislation as purely climate-focused—there needs to be some additional criteria in order to get sufficient support to pass it through.

However, there is a lot of opportunity there, because things like clean fuel and renewable energy are good for the economy and are ripe for exploration here in Oregon.

For example, there is great potential for clean-tech job growth in Oregon. We will continue to work on these issues, but always with the backdrop of those more immediate things that make a day-to-day difference in our communities.

Speaking of clean fuel, Senate Bill 488, which would have repealed the sunset on provisions related to low carbon fuel standards set to expire in 2015, failed to pass in the last session. Do you predict that there will be efforts to renew clean fuel legislation in the future?



Yes, I definitely don't think we've seen the end of this issue. There is a lot of opportunity surrounding clean fuel in Oregon; it will just be a matter of cutting through the clutter and demonstrating how low carbon standards are good for the economy. I believe that we will see renewed efforts in this area in coming legislative sessions.

What types of legislation related to climate change do you foresee coming up in the next session?



It is critical for the legislature to continue addressing climate-related issues, and we will likely see a lot of work in that direction in upcoming sessions. For example, there is a lot of interest right now in the idea of a carbon tax. We actually just passed a bill creating a study around a carbon tax, which received very broad support, including from groups you wouldn't expect. This is an example of a bill that received broad support because there is a clear potential economic benefit to the state in addition to the environmental benefit.

From a legislative perspective, what do you consider to be the greatest **environmental threat** that climate change poses to Oregon?



Water is probably our biggest issue in Oregon. Our water supply is almost entirely dependent on snowmelt, so with warmer winters and less snow in the mountains, we will be losing a large amount of our annual water supply.

Representative Jules Bailey (District 42) serves as Chair of the House Energy and Environment Committee, Co-Vice Chair of the Revenue Committee and the Joint Committee on Tax Credits, and is a member of the Natural Resources subcommittee of Ways and Means. More information about Rep. Bailey may be found at <http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bailey>.



The effects of this can be far-reaching, particularly in the area of agriculture, which forms a significant part of our state's economy and provides jobs for Oregonians, particularly in rural areas. Certain agricultural sectors are especially sensitive to climate variations; for example, pinot noir grapes that require specific climate conditions to thrive. Lower streamflow from decreased snowmelt will also impact fisheries and ecosystem services.



Oregon is a state that greatly depends on its natural resources, so as each of those resources is impacted by a changing climate, we will have to adapt our infrastructure accordingly, and it is the legislature's job to get in front of that and address it.

From a legislative perspective, what do you consider to be the greatest **social threat** that climate change poses to Oregon?



The most important social impact will be the direct financial effect on Oregonians' pocketbooks. For example, going back to the water issue, drier winters will require us to invest in new infrastructure to store water, which is going to cost a lot of money.

Climate change is going to impact how we plan for and build cities. The more money we are forced to spend on adapting our basic infrastructure, the less money we have to spend on education, public health, and other social programs.



We have already begun some forms of adaptation, particularly in the metro area with ecodistricts and infrastructure in the city that is adapted to climate. However, there will still be social implications of, for example, are we really going to be able to commute an hour each way to work? Maybe that will be feasible in the future with new technologies and vehicles coming online, but certainly there are question marks there.

Are there any particular considerations that Oregon must take into account in enacting climate change legislation as compared to other states?



I do think the water issue is one that is particularly relevant because we're not historically tapping deep underground aquifers or those sorts of things for irrigation or water supply because we are dependent on what falls from the sky, what freezes, and what melts. That's a particularly Oregon and Northwest problem. Our hydropower system and our water system are all dependent on seasonal flows, so we're a very seasonally-oriented state, and when the seasons change, so do we. Oregon's opportunity legislatively is to be part of the west coast leadership in showing that climate policies are good for economic development.



We've got an opportunity with an aggressive neighbor to the South in California. We're able to partner with them and not necessarily have to go at everything alone. And Washington, with Governor Insley, is ready to take a leadership role as well; and you have British Columbia and all that they've done. Governor Kitzhaber has really focused on a Pacific Coast collaborative that brings British Columbia and the three states together to create some unified policies, and Oregon has the opportunity to be a real leader in that.

Given the concerns you've noted, do you sense that climate change is a priority in the Oregon legislature?



I think every legislator, first and foremost, is concerned with the community that elects them. I think each legislator is looking at the everyday needs of the people in their community and how to best respond to those.

It's not a matter of not prioritizing climate; a lot of people in my caucus feel very strongly that it's important, but for legislators in general it's really about asking what it means to their community and often those are expressed in terms of economic impacts or jobs because that is what's most tangible.

What can our section do to help the legislature address climate change in Oregon?



There is no substitute for face time with your legislator when it comes to helping pass things. While peoples' schedules are very busy and it can be a chore to make it down to Salem, especially with the funny committee schedules, when there are bills that you care about, coming down to Salem and talking to folks about it is important.



I would also suggest to your membership, because they are respected leaders in the community, making time to just call your legislator and invite him out for a cup of coffee. We're all citizen legislators, we're all pretty easy to get ahold of and talk to directly.



Sometimes things as simple as having someone in your community who is a respected professional who understands these kinds of things come and talk to you is a big difference-maker, so I wouldn't underestimate the power of personal persuasion that the people in the Sustainable Future Section have. ■

*Photo by J. Michael Mattingly*

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# The Long View

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## Consider This:

“We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires, and crippling drought, and more powerful storms.” ~ President Obama, 2013 inaugural address