Economic & Social Policy and International Affairs #2

Subject: Support the Establishment of the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program

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Submitted by: SEIU 503 Retirees Local 001 (for the Climate Justice Committee)

WHEREAS, continued reliance on oil and gas is extraordinarily expensive, and the American people are footing the bill while wealthy corporations make billions.

WHEREAS, the fossil fuel industry knew as early as the 1950s that their product would change the climate[1] and cause damage.

WHEREAS, holding the industry squarely accountable for its activities will boost American prosperity by limiting damage to communities and the environment, protecting taxpayers and consumers, and paving the way for the clean energy technologies of the future.

WHEREAS, for more than 100 years, the federal government has provided massive subsidies to oil and gas. The recently passed "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," federal subsidies have increased from more than $5 billion[2] to more than $12 billion[3] per year. Some analysts estimate the total is even higher, as much as $15 billion[4] to almost $30 billion[5] per year.

WHEREAS, the fossil fuel industry has spent more than $1 billion over the last 20 years lobbying[6] for tax credits. Around half of oil and gas production in the United States is estimated to be dependent on subsidies[7] in order to be profitable.[8]

WHEREAS, wealthy oil and gas corporations often lease[9] public lands at below-market rates, giving taxpayers less than a fair rate of return.

WHEREAS, There are approximately 3.5 million[10] abandoned wells across the country—those that have been left behind without being cleaned-up—that can leak toxins that pollute the air, water, and land. Even according to oil and gas regulators, many of these[11] are actually orphaned, meaning wells where the owner has gone bankrupt or cannot be identified. When this happens, taxpayers often end up footing the bill, and the cost to safely plug and prevent these wells from causing further harm to the environment and communities is enormous.

WHEREAS, the polluter pays principle is the idea that the costs of polluting activities should be borne by the party who caused it, rather than the individual or community who suffer from the consequences of pollution.

WHEREAS, the polluter pays principle aims to correct market failure[12] and its resulting social injustice by shifting pollution costs from society to polluting companies, while simultaneously reducing emissions.

WHEREAS, Oregonians should not continue to be forced to bear the rising costs of climate disasters such as costs of heat domes, health impacts, drought, and wildfires, while fossil fuel companies continue to rake in record breaking profits.

WHEREAS, rough estimates based on other states' experience show Oregon could raise up to $15 billion over 25 years to pay for:

- wildfire resilience and prevention,
- weatherization and energy saving improvements to homes and buildings,
- flood protection, upgrades to power and wastewater systems,
- advanced irrigation to combat drought, and more.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, SEIU Local 503, OPEU, continues to be part of any coalition and thousands of active supporters that supports the Make Polluters Pay[13] or the Climate Super Fund effort/process and participate in laying the groundwork for and supporting legislation in the 2027 session. This legislation will raise revenue for climate mitigation and restoration work throughout Oregon using levies charged against the most polluting fossil fuel corporations.

References:

[1] https://www.ucs.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/Decades-of-Deceit-full-report.pdf

[2] https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/131/Tax-Expenditures-FY2025.pdf

[3] https://www.taxpayer.net/energy-natural-resources/oil-gas-coal-win-big-in-the-one-big-beautiful-bill/

[4] https://fossilfuelsubsidytracker.org/country/

[5] https://oilchange.org/publications/paying-for-climate-chaos-us-subsidies-fossil-fuels/

[6] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S146290112500187X

[7] https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ac0a10

[8] https://www.nature.com/articles/s41560-017-0009-8

[9] https://www.wilderness.org/articles/press-release/new-report-confirms-oil-and-gas-industrys-suffocating-reign-public-lands

[10] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004896972401129X

[11] https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/iogcc/documents/publications/Orphan%20Wells%20Revised.pdf

[12] https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3009547

[13] https://makepolluterspay.net/learn-states/oregon/

Additional references:
1. https://earth.org/explainer-what-is-the-polluter-pays-principle-and-how-can-it-be-used-in-climate-policy/
2. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/fossil-fuel-subsidies-taxpayer-costs
3. https://www.sierraclub.org/oregon/blog/2026/03/oregon-legislators-fail-make-polluters-pay-again
4. https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Measures/Overview/SB682

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Financial: No fiscal impact

Equity: This resolution would have a positive impact as it may mitigate racial disparities in pollution exposure and reduce environmental harm inflicted upon marginalized communities.

Legal: No Legal Impact

Political: Our union is already an active member of the Make Polluters Pay coalition and has previously supported Oregon legislation. This resolution affirms our participation in this coalition and our commitment to this work.