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PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon House Democrats highlight the need for strong climate action during Legislative Days

SALEM – September Legislative Committee Days concluded on Wednesday following three days of meetings where panels highlighted the scope of the challenges caused by climate change, as well as opportunities for innovation and investment.

“The science is clear that climate change negatively impacts countless sectors of our economy, public health and our daily way of life,” said Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), chair of the House Committee on Energy and Environment. “The need for strong climate action grows every day and we have the responsibility to come back to the table with a strong legislative answer.”

The House Committee on Energy and Environment heard testimony about the nationwide and worldwide growth of electric vehicle manufacturing and usage. Portland General Electric representatives testified that there will be 400 new EV models by 2025 and more than \$250 billion global investment in new EV models. PGE representatives testified that electricity prices are low and stable compared to more volatile gas prices and can save approximately \$1,000 on fuel ever year.

“The public and leaders in the private sector have signaled that electric vehicles are the future, and that future is much closer than we think,” Power said. “Customers are demanding this change and we need statewide infrastructure investments in more accessible charging stations to make this possible.”

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation made up nearly 40% of statewide emissions in 2016, according to the most recent Oregon Global Warming Commission [report](#) to the Legislature.

Multiple committees heard testimonies about the impact of wildfires and stressed the rising intensity and frequency of wildfires are having on communities and emergency responders. In addition to health risks, wildfires force power shutdowns that can make it more difficult for Oregonians in danger to contact emergency services.

“My community is one of many in Oregon that has suffered severe economic and health repercussions from wildfires and their smoke,” said Rep. Pam Marsh (D-Ashland), who sits on the Governor’s Council on Wildfire Response. “Megafires are increasing and we simply can’t wait for another fire on the scale of what decimated Paradise to invest in more wildfire mitigation tools.”

The recently created House Committee on Water heard testimony from the Farmers Conservation Alliance, Oregon Water Resources Congress, Farmers Irrigation District in Hood River and the Hermiston Irrigation District. This testimony included details on how climate change is leading to less snow and more rain, causing a greater need to modernize storage systems to capture rainwater.

“There’s been great work happening on the ground to modernize our irrigation systems,” said Rep. Ken Helm (D-Beaverton), the chair of the Water Committee. “But many irrigation projects were built 75-100 years ago. Further investments in upgrades and repairs are essential if we’re to protect our natural and working lands in the face of a changing climate.”

The House Committee on Health Care heard testimony from representatives of the American Lung Association, PCUN (Oregon's Farmworker Union), the Oregon Thoracic Society and Washington County Department of Health about the public health impacts of extreme heat caused by climate change.

Testimony highlighted that climate change is already impacting human health in Oregon and will do so for years to come. The impacts include increases in respiratory illnesses, heat stroke, cardiovascular disease, allergies, asthma attacks and more, which disproportionately impact children, older adults, low-income communities, communities of color and the homeless. Less than 20% of local health departments have the resources to deal with health impacts of climate change and Oregon's 87,000 farm workers are particularly at risk for increases in heat-related illnesses.

"I couldn't agree more with the testimony we heard Monday: climate policy is health policy," said Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), chair of the House Committee on Health Care. "Reducing our carbon emissions will lead to direct public health improvements. We have the responsibility to do more for our at-risk populations."

The 2019 summer was the hottest on record in the Northern Hemisphere, [according to federal data](#) released this week.

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