



OFFICE OF THE HOUSE SPEAKER OFFICE OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT

900 Court St., N.E.
Salem OR 97301

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Danny Moran

danny.moran@oregonlegislature.gov

Johnmartin Sherman-Lewis

johnmartin.shermanlewis@oregonlegislature.gov

\$100 Million Climate Resilience Budget Aims to Tackle Drought, Extreme Weather, Infrastructure Needs

SALEM – In response to the intensifying effects of climate change, climate resiliency and environmental justice leaders in the Oregon Legislature announced a \$100 million Climate Resilience Budget to support drought-impacted communities, keep vulnerable Oregonians safe from extreme weather events, make infrastructure investments that will reduce carbon emissions, and address other urgent environmental priorities.

“Drought, fire and other climate disruptions put the most vulnerable Oregonians at great risk,” said Senator Kate Lieber (D-Beaverton), chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment. “By investing in resilient homes and clean energy, we can build safer and healthier communities, reduce the cost of energy for consumers, and create good-paying jobs.”

Protecting Oregonians from Future Heatwaves: The 2021 extreme heatwave resulted in at least 96 deaths across 28 Oregon cities. Many of those individuals were low-income renters, with most having no access to life-saving cooling devices such as air conditioning or heat pumps in their homes.

The budget responds to the emerging crisis of extreme weather events by supporting the installation of air conditioners, air filters and heat pumps to keep Oregonians cool during the summer months, including seniors and people with disabilities. It also assists local governments in establishing cooling centers, warming centers, and air shelters.

“The deaths we saw last summer made it crystal clear that we have to take immediate action to keep vulnerable Oregonians safe from very real health and safety risks posed by climate change, including extreme heat and smoke events,” said Rep. Pam Marsh (D-Ashland), chair of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. “This 2022 legislative package will help Oregonians stay safe, and it will also continue our ongoing work to reduce the emissions that drive these conditions on the ground.”

Drought Relief: Widespread drought across the state impacts more than 1.8 million Oregonians. This investment package includes additional, targeted funding to make Oregon more resilient to drought conditions. These new funds join \$100 million in drought relief passed during the Legislature’s December 2021 special session to aid Oregon’s rural communities severely impacted by drought, heat, or fire.

Improving Home Energy Efficiency: The package includes fresh support for the bipartisan Healthy Homes Repair Fund, helping low-income Oregonians repair and rehabilitate their homes to improve health, safety, and energy efficiency. The program was established by the Legislature in 2021 through House Bill 2842, chief sponsored by Representatives Marsh, Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), and Khanh Pham (D-Portland).

“More support for the successful Healthy Homes program will help low-income Oregonians lower their cost of living by spending less on heating and cooling,” said Rep. Zach Hudson (D-Troutdale), vice-chair of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. “This is only part of our ongoing commitment to support a clean energy economy and prioritize the people and communities most affected by the climate crisis.”

Encouraging Solar Energy: The plan invests in solar and storage rebates for low-income Oregon residents and service providers who install solar energy systems in their homes and businesses. The Legislature established the bipartisan Oregon Solar + Storage Rebate Program during the 2019 legislative session (House Bill 2618).

Reducing Emissions: In an attempt to lower transportation emissions – the largest source of emissions in the state – key investments will be made in zero-emission vehicles, including charging networks for medium- and heavy-duty trucks, and new incentives for Oregonians to drive electric vehicles. The Legislature will also establish the Resilient, Efficient Buildings Task Force to reduce emissions from homes and buildings, the second-largest source of climate pollution in the state.

Seismic Upgrades of Oregon’s Fuel Storage: Oregon’s aging fuel storage infrastructure is extremely vulnerable. A major earthquake would result in the critical failure of these storage systems and a major statewide disaster. Additional funding will support seismic planning at oil and liquid fuel terminals.

Additional details about this funding package will be available during the final week of the 2022 legislative session.

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