

Rally: Activists came from all parts of Oregon

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to the Capitol to support Senate Bill 1530, which aims to cap and shrink the state's carbon emissions and generate revenue for environmental projects.

One of those local teens was Angelique Prater, 17, of Salem, who spoke to the crowd about her activism.

In an interview, she said that her parents, immigrants from Mexico who work in agriculture, were already feeling the effects of climate change — extreme temperatures in winter and summer.

She said she first heard about the proposal from friends in school and then got involved in activism.

"I'm here today to fight for the climate crisis and to, you know, push our legislators to fight for strong climate legislation," Prater said, adding that legislation was the most important part of "solving the climate crisis."

The cap-and-trade policy would carve up the emissions limit into allowances that emitters can buy and sell on a market. The idea is that as emissions targets get lower, fewer allowances are available, and industry would improve pollution controls.

Opponents have criticized the plan for its potential impact on consumers and small businesses, particularly through higher fuel costs. Recent revisions to the legislation spare counties east of the Cascades from regulations on fuel importers and provide a way for natural gas companies to guard their low-income customers against higher costs.

The climate event began at noon with speeches on the Capitol steps from activists and political officials, including remarks from Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, Milwaukie Mayor Mark Gamba, who is running for Congress, and Eric Richardson, the Eugene-Springfield NAACP president. Following speeches, the demonstrators marched around the Capitol chanting and waving signs with messages supporting the climate



Sam Stites/Oregon Capital Bureau

Activists pack the steps of the Oregon State Capitol on Tuesday to show support for a cap-and-trade bill being considered by lawmakers.

legislation.

The event, organized by the environmental group Renew Oregon, was a counterpoint to a protest in Salem last week organized by #TimberUnity.

Activists made the trek to Salem from all parts of the state, including Dean Myerson, who was part of a carload of demonstrators who drove three hours from The Dalles.

Myerson said he believes Oregon needs to lead the way on climate action.

"We can't just wait for everybody else to do something first, which seems to be one of the arguments. 'We can't do this alone,' which is true, but somebody has to start," Myerson said. "In Wasco County, we had a series of really bad fires a couple years ago. A lot of historic homes were destroyed, a farmer died ... There's always been fires, but climate change is making them worse."

Maia Stout, a 15-year-old from Yachats, explained to the crowd what climate action means to her. For the past several months, Stout — like 17-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg — has participated in the global youth climate strike, standing outside her high school in Newport every Friday to bring attention to the issue.

"I advocate for climate action because I understand that the mistakes we've made don't fix themselves," Stout said. "I raised my voice because I can't vote for three more years and time is running out."

Coral Avery, 22, a student at Oregon State University, is an enrolled member of the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.

"Climate and natural resource use really goes back to indigenous people," Avery said. "That's the main reason why I'm here today, is to represent, the best I can, represent my community and other indigenous communities who have overall been left out of the conversation or at least haven't been centered in it before."

Avery, who is involved in student government at Oregon State, said that she has lobbied for climate legislation for four years, since moving to Oregon. She said she was "most hopeful" for the bill that was proposed last year, but that it didn't protect rural communities.

"And I've heard that, through reading it, that it's been revised in some ways to better support them and look out for when things change when polluters are held accountable for their emissions," Avery said.

The rally drew people like

Andy Saultz, who is running for the Portland state House seat being vacated by Mitch Greenlick, a retiring Democrat. Saultz said he was running for office "because we have not seen climate action."

"We have not seen a Legislature really prioritize the next generation," Saultz said. "... As a father of two toddlers, I just really worry about the long-term health of our community."

Saultz, a Democrat, addressed why he would enter politics at a moment where tensions in the Capitol have started running high, and as Republicans seem prepared to leave the building to avoid taking a vote on the reworked cap-and-trade policy.

"I want to help, I want to get active," Saultz said. "These are problems that are real and, again, my kids can't be here to advocate for themselves. And so I think we have a moral obligation to advocate for them."

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Neighborhood: Commission approved a host of new development codes to help

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urban renewal funds.

The city hosted a series of open houses gathering community input. Kevin Cronin, the city's community development director, proposed a mix of commercial property, varying densities of housing, public spaces, trails and improved streets.

Cronin proposed limiting the number of new housing units in the neighborhood to 350. Commercial space in the neighborhood will be limited to 20,000 square feet per building, with a 50,000-square-foot cap overall. The master plan also prohibits drive-thru restaurants to avoid traffic impacts like those seen at the nearby Wendy's.

The Planning Commission initially rejected the plan, calling it too restrictive on property owners while not directly addressing the traffic concerns that prompted the need for a master plan. Commissioner Ken Yuill, who owns much of the property in the Spur 104 area and recused himself during the commission's hearings, criticized how prescriptive some of the standards are but said he recognizes the city's goals of managing traffic and willingness to meet in the middle.

"I think all and all, no, I'm not happy about it," he said. "But the commission felt this was the best they could do at the time."

Vijaya Nakka, who owns two plots of land in the neighborhood where he plans to build two homes for senior living spaces, said he is grateful the city wants to improve the neighborhood while controlling traffic.

Several property owners in the neighborhood have spoken with Stuart Emmons, an architect and planner from Astoria who

suggested the name Chelsea Gardens based on historical city maps of the area. Emmons is working with Walsh Construction Co. out of Portland to build an affordable housing complex of nearly 50 units in the region. He has hailed the master plan as providing a more livable neighborhood for development proposals like his.

"I want to be near transit, being near workplaces, near shopping, obviously markets," he said. "Ideally, people can walk to a market and use transit, not absolutely have to have a car."

Along with Chelsea Gardens, the City Commission on Tuesday approved a host of new development codes meant to increase the density of housing. Cronin's recommendations included lower lot size requirements and more diverse housing types, such as mixed-use commercial-residential buildings, multiplexes, townhomes, cottage clusters and accessory dwelling units.

The Planning Commission had struck Cronin's recommendation that subdivisions of 20 or more homes be required to include accessory dwelling units, and another banning certain siding materials city staff sees as unsuitable for the region's environment.

The City Commission, which pushed Cronin to increase lot size and parking requirements for cottage clusters, on Tuesday also struck Cronin's language defining transitional housing "provided as a social service to homeless such as a shelter, warming center or dormitory."

Mayor Henry Balensifer said he isn't opposed to transitional housing, but worried about setting a precedent allowing it before the city has developed standards to regulate such development.

Mitchell: New bill 'accommodates feedback'

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"I believe this new version accommodates feedback from Oregonians who are concerned about impacts to local jobs and economies, while still beginning to take reasonable and urgent action to address the climate crisis that is already negatively impacting our communities."

During the town hall, Mitchell said most of the concerns in House District 32 center around the Georgia-Pacific Wauna Mill and the regulation of fuel.

Farming and forestry interests are exempt from the bill, she said, and fuel regulation in counties west of the Cascades would not start until 2025. She said Georgia-Pacific could qualify for some relief under the bill.

"The Wauna Mill has been very cooperative in this entire process, very open about what their specific hurdles and obstacles are," Mitchell said.

Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, has said she would oppose the bill unless managers at the Wauna Mill tell her they are OK with the legislation.

Several people associated with #TimberUnity and the Clatsop County Republican Party challenged Mitchell during the town hall.

"We've called, emailed, blown horns ... you DO NOT listen," Christal Kumpula, a leader of the county

GOP, wrote in a live feed during the town hall on the representative's Facebook page.

"I really do try to listen," Mitchell said in response to the criticism. "I'm not always going to agree with everything that is said, but I will do my due diligence in making sure not only that I listen to you, but that I try to do as much research as I possibly can to verify information and to make sound decisions based off of that information — it's the best and most that I can do."

She told constituents that relations between Democrats and Republicans in Salem are not as adversarial as they appear, and that the vast majority of bills passed are by consensus.

"It tends to usually be some of these bigger issues that bring people out — climate change, gun control — that are usually those big things the media gloms on and political partiesglom onto," she said.

"But in truth ... we're all people. We all live here, and I think most of us really just want what is best for Oregon and the people who live here. We care about each other. We're neighbors. It's just sometimes we have different perspectives about that. At least most issues we're all on the same page."

"It's those big ones that I think are going to be the more problematic ones where we're going to have to have those broader conversations," Mitchell said.

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