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QuickPoint! – Moving Beyond Symbolism

By John A. Charles, Jr.

Last week Governor Kate Brown gave a speech to Portland activists promising to secure carbon-pricing legislation in next year's one-month legislative session. A few days later, she met with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and urged him to maintain or expand the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Southern Oregon.

Clearly, the Governor is getting bad advice about environmental priorities. Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant; it's a beneficial gas that is essential for plant growth. If the Governor continues Oregon's "war on carbon," she will impose great costs on the economy with no offsetting benefits.

Similarly, there was no need for the Governor to lobby on behalf of national monument expansion when Oregon already has plenty of federal land in protected status. She should have used her time with Secretary Zinke to argue for improved management of BLM lands in Oregon, including forest thinning and increased timber harvesting. Without active management, all public lands—including parks, wilderness areas and national monuments—will continue to be threatened by Oregon's top environmental risk: catastrophic wildfires.

Holding photo ops to tell her supporters exactly what they want to hear is not leadership. The Governor needs to get serious about environmental problems.

John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

