

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and Global Warming: Can You Help?

By David W. Oaks

On Sunday, September 21, 2014, here in Eugene Oregon, I participated, with my wonderful wife Debra, in a local rally to support the major march in New York City for climate justice. Here is something I have been taking action against for a few years: one of the worst defenders of climate crisis is the huge US Chamber of Commerce based in Washington, DC. The US Chamber was taken over a number of years ago by a few big corporations that promote the current economic system.

Here in Eugene, Oregon, and in almost every medium and large city in the USA, there is a local Chamber of Commerce. It may surprise you to hear that your local chamber tends to be fairly independent from the big US Chamber. There is a campaign to have some of the locally-based chambers speak out that the US Chamber of Commerce is all wrong about global warming.

For years, the leading climate crisis group, 350, has had a campaign to ask each chamber of commerce to say "The US Chamber does not speak for us!" I have helped mobilize several actions requesting that the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce make a statement of concern about human-caused global warming. I have organized several public events, street theater, protests, and lots of communication by email and even letters to the editor.

Unfortunately, the Eugene Area Chamber has refused to speak up about this disaster that may become one of the worst catastrophes in the history of planet Earth. Scientists know for certain that global warming is horrible. And there is a risk of run-away climate crisis that threatens life on Earth. I call this danger *Normalgeddon*. Here is where we stand:

Our local chamber has decided that the executive committee for their elected board of directors should be in charge of any statements about global warming. The elected leader of this board is attorney Sheryl Balthrop. For the past nine months, Ms. Balthrop has refused to make any statement about the climate, and refused to say if or when she will make such a statement. Ms. Balthrop is also the volunteer lawyer for the large human services agency ShelterCare, which is relevant, because poor people are especially vulnerable during environmental disasters. ShelterCare is one of our largest local mental health agencies. Adding to the role of ShelterCare, their director Susan Ban serves on the chamber's board, and ShelterCare's Consumer Council unanimously asked that Ms. Balthrop meet and speak up about this issue. Ms. Balthrop flatly refused. (continues on back side)

You may watch three videos about activities we have done that are fun and peaceful, to encourage the Eugene area chamber to do the right thing:

1. Youtube: Boycott Normal Eugene Area Chamber
2. Vimeo: How I Stopped Worrying Eugene Chamber
3. Vimeo: Our Golden Ostrich

An easy action you can take:

Please contact the board secretary and staff for ShelterCare via these two e-mail addresses:

marciaedwards@windermere.com
scadmin@sheltercare.org

Sample message, though your own words are best:

Please speak out about global warming! Marginalized people are especially vulnerable to climate crises. ShelterCare is very much connected to the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce because ShelterCare's director, Susan Ban, is on the board, and its lawyer, Sheryl Balthrop, is the chamber's elected leader. Find out about the campaign here: chamber.350.org

The above is from the blog by PsychoQuad at www.davidwoaks.com