



SB 488 - MEDICAL WASTE INCINERATION ACT

CHIEF SPONSORS:

SENATOR PATTERSON, REPRESENTATIVE NERON, SENATOR MANNING JR

REGULAR SPONSORS:

SEN. CAMPOS, SEN. GELSER BLOUIN, SEN. GOLDEN, SEN. TAYLOR

Impacts of Waste Incineration In Oregon

The Covanta Waste Incinerator in the mid-Willamette Valley burns as much as 14,000 tons of medical waste each year, much of it imported from other states and Canada. Medical waste is far more toxic than municipal waste because it contains higher amounts of plastics, polyvinyl chloride, heavy metals and dioxins.

Waste incineration pollutes soils, rivers and air with heavy metals and toxic chemicals where they can harm human health and wildlife. Heavy metals ingestion by children can lead to learning disabilities, lowered IQ, hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder. **Dioxin is linked with cancer and birth defects.**

SB 488 REDUCES AIR TOXICS EMISSIONS

- Oregon is home to one of the nation's few municipal waste incinerators allowed to burn untreated medical waste.
- Rural communities in the mid-Willamette Valley are being exposed to heavy metals and dozens of hazardous air toxics from the Covanta Marion incinerator.
- Environmental protections, particularly reducing high mercury levels in the Willamette River, will benefit from stronger waste incinerator regulations.
- SB 488 will establish the current EPA emission limits for a large new medical waste incinerator to fit Covanta's current operations.

Did you know?

Covanta Marion can burn thousands of tons of imported medical waste while taking advantage of weaker municipal trash incinerator regulations. This makes Oregon a dumping ground for the toxic pollution that other states don't want.

SB 488 is a 2023 OCN Priority for the Environment bill



Municipal vs. Medical Waste Incineration: The Regulatory Loophole

Federal regulations for **medical waste** incinerators are far stricter than those for **municipal waste** incinerators because burning **medical waste** emits more toxic pollutants. However, a loophole in EPA regulations allows an incinerator classified as a “**municipal waste incinerator**” to burn significant amounts of more hazardous **medical waste** without being held to the stricter emissions limits.

This regulatory loophole allows the Covanta Marion incinerator to follow weak municipal waste incinerator regulations. That is illogical because Covanta, under current laws, can burn up to 70% non-municipal waste - including medical waste brought in from other states and countries.

This makes Oregon a dumping ground for the toxic **medical waste that other states don't want.**

SB 488 Provides a Sensible Solution

SB 488 will close the regulatory loophole in Oregon's air quality laws. If passed, SB 488 will give the DEQ the authority to accurately assess if medical waste specified weight limits are exceeded, and apply the stricter emission limits required for medical waste incinerators under federal law. SB 488 will not impact taking care of Oregon's medical waste.

SB 488 will appropriately regulate a large polluter and ensure better environmental protection and public health outcomes for all Oregonians.

SB 488 will improve air quality by setting stronger air emission limits that will guide waste incineration policies now and into the future.

Community Support for SB 488

