

Oregon Renewable Options Program  
Support HB 3221

3/8/2021

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice Chair Reardon, and Members of the House Committee on Water,

Thank you for your service, time and attention to HB 3221. My name is Shannon Souza, I am a licensed profession engineer and founder of Sol Coast Companies, located in Coos Bay. For the past 22 years, my woman owned company has provided professional engineering, architecture, permitting, project management & contracting solutions with a mission to support strategic growth, responsible development and sustainable coastal living.

Through my work, I experience firsthand the many barriers that block local small renewable energy development projects – the two most common being low available rates for electricity sold on the wholesale market and the high costs and complexity of interconnecting to the utility grid.

HB 3221 provides a voluntary pathway for communities and local renewable energy developers to increase the amount of clean energy powering Oregon's grid. This bill facilitates an increase in community energy security while keeping electricity rates affordable and developing a cumulative portfolio of buildable clean, secure energy options under the oversight of Energy Trust of Oregon. This bill will also likely enhance local clean energy job development opportunities.

Energy resilience is a buzz word that we can correlate to experiences many of us have shared recently. In Oregon, transmission from out of state through our utility grid sparked some of the fires that destroyed many homes and businesses last summer. In Paradise, California these losses were compounded by loss of life. We have years of recovery in front of us that must include localized generation and storage updates to Oregon's electrical system. In the meantime we may have to live with Public Safety Power Shutoffs at certain times of the year to prevent the risk of more catastrophic fires. In more urban settings, last month's ice storm took out power to a record number of Oregonians for whom energy resilience is increasingly a priority.

Energy security is the ability to power critical community facilities during these kinds of crises. Illumination, refrigeration and communications are the three things that cut deepest when you cannot access them. Renewable energy projects with storage (battery, pump storage or renewable hydrogen) can provide backup electricity to medical devices keeping Oregonians alive, community centers providing shelter, grocery stores and food banks keeping food from spoiling, police, fire, and other first responders that work so hard to keep us safe or entire reservations or other communities during short and long term outage and recovery efforts.

It is difficult to place a value on the benefits that this kind of backup energy provides. We have learned from our Puerto Rican hurricane survivors that over 2,000 lives were lost due to lack of access to electricity to provide for food preservation, water purification or medical treatment. As a resident of Oregon's seismic/tsunami/wildfire prone southern coast and representative of Oregon's Professional Engineers on the governors Resilience Mitigation Advisory Council, I am focused on aiding our survivors and those tasked with orchestrating our recovery efforts. This

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bill would add to the portfolio of options that our communities have available to accomplish their own energy goals.

These projects can also provide benefits to the electrical grid during normal operations, such as keeping the lights, communications and operations flowing at our places of business at the end of the transmission line, where outages frequently disrupt our education, commerce and communications.

HB 3221 would a new policy framework that can help Oregon's local governments and Tribes take strategic, informed action in support of their long-term community energy security, economic participation. Please support this bill.

Respectfully,  
Shannon Souza, PE  
Sol Coast Companies