

Testimony of Peter Bergel on SB 360

Before the Senate Energy and Environment Committee March 23, 2021

Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley and Members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Bergel. I live at 1850 Saginaw St. S. in Salem, Oregon. I was Campaign Director of 1980's ballot measure 7. As Mr. Johnson has explained, our polling showed that the public wanted a solution to the nuclear waste problem before any more of it is created. Our polling also showed that the people of Oregon wanted to be consulted about building more nuclear power plants even if an operating federal nuclear waste repository did exist.

It is important to note that our campaign to place this measure on the ballot was conducted entirely with volunteers. We had NO paid signature collectors. Also, once the measure was on the ballot, our campaign spent approximately \$30,000 while our opposition spent \$660,000 (which was a lot in 1980). That is, we were outspent more than 20:1, yet our measure still passed, indicating a high level of conviction felt by the public.

Concern about nuclear waste that will be dangerous for quarter of a million years was the primary motivator that led us to create our measure, and it was also the voters' primary concern about nuclear power. The industry has always claimed that this problem is either solved, will be solved soon, or can be gotten around somehow. For 70 years, we have not seen this to be true. The concern about nuclear waste that voters expressed by passing ballot measure 7 in 1980 remains just as valid today. There is still no known way to prevent nuclear waste from harming people and the environment for the timespan during which it will remain deadly – a timespan that far exceeds recorded history. SB 360 is an attempt to deprive Oregonians of the protection against nuclear waste that they voted for without solving that pernicious problem.

SB 360 contains a provision to amend ballot measure 7's requirement for a statewide vote on nuclear power plant siting, requiring only a local vote instead. This is a cynical attempt to set up a poor, rural Oregon county for a propaganda campaign claiming jobs and other local benefits, as has been done so often before by development interests. The dangers and threats of nuclear power are not limited to a local area, as the Chernobyl and Fukushima disasters have shown. Therefore, it is manifestly unjust to deprive a county's neighbors from a say over whether to accept nuclear power's risks, especially if they are not even to receive any of the claimed benefits.

For all these reasons, I call upon the members of this committee to vote NO on SB 360. Please do not permit it to proceed further through the legislative process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.