

HB 2038 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Action Date: 04/08/25

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 11-1-0-0

Yeas: 11 - Andersen, Edwards, Gamba, Helm, Levy B, Levy E, Lively, Marsh, Osborne, Owens, Wallan

Nays: 1 - Neron

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/27, 4/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE), in consultation with the Public Utility Commission and the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council, to study particular aspects of nuclear energy and submit a report by January 31, 2027. It sunsets the study and reporting requirements on January 2, 2028.

Detailed summary:

Requires the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE), in consultation with the Public Utility Commission and the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council, to study the following subjects as related to nuclear energy, including legal pathways for the disposal of nuclear waste produced from nuclear energy:

- Advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy
- Feasibility of constructing nuclear power plants, including small modular reactors, in Oregon
- How the use of nuclear energy may or may not support current energy systems
- Economic growth and workforce development potential for Oregon communities
- Safety of nuclear energy
- Ability to safely and legally store and dispose of nuclear waste of the type produced from nuclear energy
- Reliability of nuclear energy
- How the use of locally produced nuclear energy can eliminate dependence on foreign-sourced energy
- Use of thorium as an option for producing nuclear energy
- Recommendations for making nuclear energy viable and cost-effective
- Long-term outlook for nuclear energy, including small modular reactors, fusion, and advanced reactors

Requires ODOE, in developing the study, to engage with the federally recognized Indian tribes located in Oregon, relevant state agencies, and stakeholders. Requires engagement with the Indian tribes to include direct written contact with the tribal government of each Indian tribe. Requires ODOE and each tribal government to reach an agreement on a reasonable amount of time for the tribal government to respond and provide input. Requires ODOE to submit a report with potential recommendations for legislation to the interim committee of the House of Representatives on Climate, Energy, and Environment no later than January 31, 2027.

Sunsets the study and reporting requirements on January 2, 2028.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Provisions of measure
- Need for renewable energy sources in Oregon
- Permitting of nuclear energy projects in Oregon

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- Use of nuclear energy in other countries
- Possibilities to study potential benefits and challenges associated with nuclear energy

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment modifies the nuclear energy study requirements; requires Indian tribal engagement in study development; and changes the deadline and sunset dates for the study and reporting requirements.

Detailed summary:

Requires the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) to consult with the Public Utility Commission and the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council on the nuclear energy study. Modifies topics study must include. Requires ODOE, in developing the study, to engage with the federally recognized Indian tribes located in Oregon, relevant state agencies, and stakeholders. Requires engagement with the Indian tribes to include direct written contact with the tribal government of each Indian tribe. Requires ODOE and each tribal government to reach an agreement on a reasonable amount of time for the tribal government to respond and provide input. Changes the due date for ODOE to submit a report to January 31, 2027. Changes sunset dates for the study and reporting requirements to January 2, 2028.

BACKGROUND:

Nuclear reactors generate electricity when thermal energy is released from the fission of nuclear fuel. According to the Oregon Department of Energy, the Columbia Generating Station in Washington State provides Oregon's nuclear power and the Bonneville Power Administration markets the electricity it produces. In 2004, Portland General Electric decommissioned its 1,130-megawatt Trojan nuclear-fueled power plant located in Columbia County.

Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) may issue site certificates for nuclear-fueled thermal power plants, but only after finding that an adequate repository for the disposal of the high-level radioactive waste produced by the plant has been licensed to operate by the appropriate agency of the federal government (ORS 469.595). If an adequate repository exists and is licensed, the nuclear-fueled thermal power plant site certificate proposal must be approved or rejected by Oregon voters at the next available statewide general election (ORS 469.597).