

February 26, 2025

235 SE 3rd St
Clatskanie, OR 97016

House Committee
Climate, Energy, and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE, Salem, OR 9730

Dear Chair John Lively and Members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment:

I write to you in support of HB 2410 and HB 2038.

I'm a native Columbia County resident, a professional who works for an Oregon electric utility, and a US Naval officer. While the views and opinions expressed here are my own and not that of my employer or the Navy, I want to establish that my lived and professional experiences inform my testimony.

SMRs are proven and reliable

Some testimony opposing small modular reactors base their arguments on untrue statements and mistaken beliefs that small modular reactors are unproven technologies—that they're too new to be safe, reliable, or affordable. Even NuScale marketed their approved SMR as an innovative new technology and that turned out to be a fallible business strategy. The fact is that hundreds of small modular pressurized-water reactors exist across our oceans and at our ports, in submarines and on ships, providing electricity to tens of thousands of American sailors on any given day. This proven technology is safe, reliable, and important in balancing Oregon's decarbonization goals with the state's skyrocketing need for reliable baseload.

Baseload need continues to grow

Dispatchable load resources will never provide the amount of sustained electricity baseload guarantees. This fact is too often overshadowed by lay people's incorrect assumptions that wind and solar are superior to that of thermal and nuclear. While battery storage and sincere mass adoption of virtual power plants may support dispatchable load growth, Northwestern utilities will still purchase power on the market to fill gaps left by eliminating local baseload and increasing local demand. This expensive barrier endangers Oregon's self-reliance to generate the power its citizens need to live.

Nuclear is affordable and fast to stand up

Oregonians need carbon-free baseload electricity as soon as possible to meet aggressive decarbonization goals that dispatchable load demonstratively cannot meet. What makes nuclear expensive is the constant investment of combatting misinformation, the alarmist-driven legal barriers, and the outrageous permitting fees that value money more than safety. Most building materials across all generation types are the same, and solar and wind are only more affordable thanks to federal subsidies. So, uneducated people's financial arguments in favor of wind and solar over nuclear stems

from artificial market conditions. These conditions changed with the IRA and ADVANCE Acts, and they're continuing to change. While America is slower at building nuclear power plants compared to Japan and France, we're capable of building safe small modular reactor plants at a competitive pace. Virginia-class submarines take approximately 7 years to build. Nimitz-class aircraft carriers take approximately 8 years to build. Trojan—a massive generation site—took only 8 years to build.

Trojan is a success story, not a cautionary tale

Trojan operated on the same technology our modern-day US Navy submarines and ships use. Pressurized-water reactors are safe and operational, proving that Trojan had the potential to see its full lifespan. The lack of industry standardization back then that now exists is what led to the construction flaws naysayers point to when claiming that Trojan was a dangerous failure, even though nothing was wrong with the reactor. Trojan—and all nuclear power plants—are more than their reactors. But people who oppose nuclear power in Oregon don't know the differences between a nuclear power plant's reactor core, its steam generator, its power turbine, and its alternator.

Unfortunately, opponents also don't know about the plant's cultural and socioeconomic significance. Trojan brought undeniable prosperity to Columbia County and Rainier. Ask the thousands of residents who live near Trojan Park (a handful of them have submitted testimony in support of HB 2410), and they'll tell you: Schools and family wages were never better than when the area had Trojan. From taxes flowing into local governments and special districts to lucrative STEM jobs that started people's careers with PGE, Trojan symbolizes something special. It empowered individual agency, fostered community connection, and instilled the recognition that we were a part of something bigger than ourselves.

Simply put, Trojan wasn't a failure. It was ahead of its time.

The time for nuclear is now, let's end the moratorium we never voted for

Oregon's moratorium on nuclear power is an obsolete law that most of the state's current population didn't vote for. Our state's population has nearly doubled since 1980—growing from 2.6 million to 4.2 million—and a large percentage of us weren't even born yet, myself included. It's unethical to deprive us of the best chance we have at getting our own reliable, clean, and affordable energy. Spent fuel and low-level radioactive waste are not burdens we should pass off to an unreliable federal government. Nor are they reasons to not use nuclear power. They're scientific opportunities for us as a state to lead the way toward durable waste management solutions.

What I find interesting about a lot of the written testimony opposing HB 2410 and HB 2038 are the erroneous conjectures that nuclear reactors don't already exist in Oregon. Those opposing nuclear power don't know that Reed College and Oregon State University have active nuclear reactors for research. This ignorance reveals the amount of education we must do to combat misinformation and build trust. I recognize you may feel pressure to maintain the moratorium's status quo since that's much easier than to educate skeptics (I get it; I work in marketing!). But I implore you to do what's right for our state's future. The right thing is to pass HB 2410 and HB 2038.

Nikole Young