

Submitter: KATHALEEN PARKER
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2410

HB 2410 - Allows the Energy Facility Siting Council to issue a site certificate for a small modular reactor energy facility demonstration project in Umatilla County.

These bills are supported by massive federal spending aimed at rebranding nuclear power as "clean" and "safe," which we know to be untrue.

QUESTION:

Why is Amazon interested in SMRs?

In short, Amazon and other tech companies will need a lot of energy to keep their data businesses going.

Kevin Miller, the vice president of global data centers for Amazon Web Services, said the company has already invested heavily in Eastern Oregon and intends to expand further.

There's a good reason Amazon is planning to source its nuclear energy north of the Columbia River.

Greg Cullen, vice president of energy services and development at Energy Northwest, a Richland, Washington, company that agreed to partner with Amazon. State Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, represents a district neighboring the Amazon data centers. She's also the chief sponsor on a bill that would back a Umatilla County commission effort to start an SMR pilot program there.

Cullen said the hope is that Energy Northwest can build additional SMRs to further increase capacity.

Energy Northwest has a two-year agreement with Amazon to conduct feasibility studies, environmental reviews and other planning activities, Cullen said. An optimistic SMR construction timeline would include an estimated completion date somewhere in the range of 2032-2035, he added. If the initial SMRs prove successful, Cullen said Amazon has agreed to share the energy from additional nuclear expansion with local utilities.

But Amazon and tech companies are trying to sell AI products today, a trend that could put pressure on utility prices for Oregon customers who are already seeing dramatic rises in their electric bills, as residents compete with tech giants for a limited amount of power. Miller, the Amazon executive, said the company is "cautiously optimistic" that it can start drawing power from SMRs in the 2030s, but said it's aware of its potential effect on utility prices.

...

Why nuclear is not a "clean" or "safe" source of power for Oregon:

- **Soaring Costs:** Nuclear energy is one of the most expensive energy sources, far outstripping the cost-effectiveness of renewables. Studies show nuclear power is at least five times more expensive than renewable energy. Nuclear projects are also notorious for massive cost overruns and delays, with taxpayers and ratepayers ultimately footing the bill.
- **Safety Risks:** Each reactor carries the potential for catastrophic accidents, a risk amplified by extreme weather and human error. Small Modular Nuclear Reactors are experimental and untested in the U.S, with only three operating worldwide and all underperforming. This technology is not worth the risk.
- **Radioactive Waste:** Nuclear plants produce toxic waste that pose long-term hazards, with no permanent repository solution in sight, leaving Oregon holding the bag when it comes to storing hazardous waste.
- **We Need Real Solutions Now:** Promises of new nuclear reactors are largely hype, as they won't come online for another 10 to 15 years, all while tech companies continue to burn fossil fuels powering their data centers and AI and diverting crucial resources from the renewable solutions we need now.

...

It is now up to Congress to ensure executive Chris Wright and Secretary Burgum follow the rule of law, safeguards our natural heritage, and hold both of them accountable when they fail to adequately carry out their responsibilities to be a good stewards of our public lands.

New nuclear reactors would divert funding from energy efficiency, renewable energy, and storage technologies, solutions that are safer, less expensive, and faster to deploy.

Please don't rebrand nuclear power as 'clean'.

Please don't let these false promises derail our transition to a sustainable future.

Thank You