

March 2, 2025

Position on Bills at 2025 Session of Oregon Legislature:

SB 216 : Oppose



The Oregon Progressive Party opposes SB 216, which would exempt all small modular reactors (“SMRs”) from the restrictions on the siting of nuclear power plants in Oregon adopted by the voters statewide in 1980. Unlike SB 215, SB 216 makes no pretense of respecting the will of Oregon voters, who in 1980 adopted a ballot measure to prohibit the siting of nuclear power plants in the absence of a facility for permanent disposal of the high-level radioactive waste that nuclear power plants produce.

The rationale for the decision by voters in 1980 remains valid today: There still exists no repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste produced by commercial nuclear power plants, despite literally 48 years of promises from the federal government and nuclear promoters.

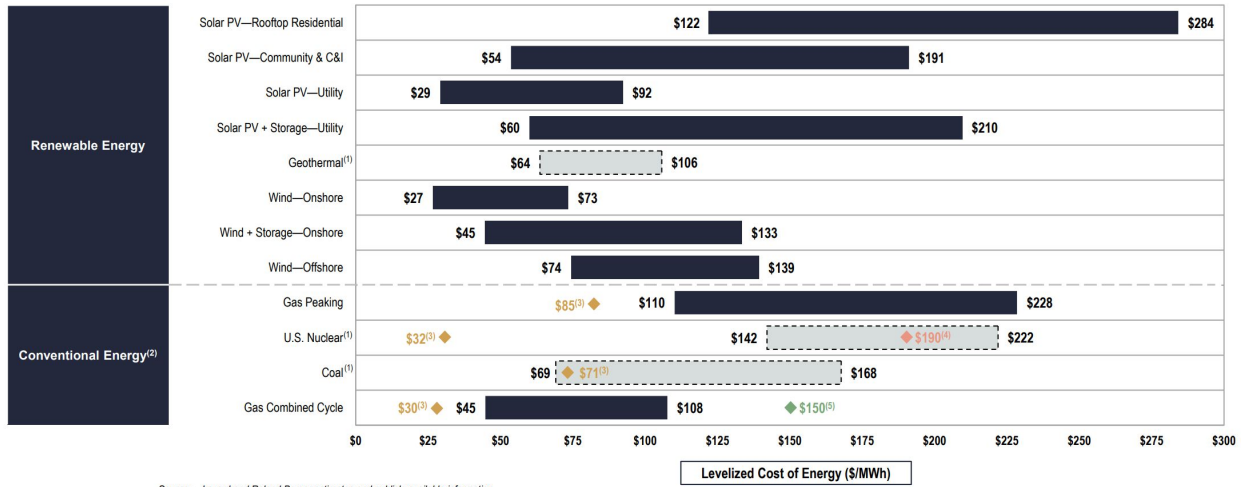
The California Legislature in 1976 enacted a law similar to the later 1980 Oregon initiative. In response, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 1977 declared that technology existed for the safe permanent disposal of that high-level radioactive waste from commercial nuclear power plants. The California Energy Commission in 1978 concluded the opposite, thus taking off the drawing boards 42 nuclear power plants planned by the California utilities. Of that generation of nuclear projects in other states, only a handful were ever completed, while over 100 of them were later canceled at a cost exceeding \$50 billion, including over \$10 billion wasted on the abandoned WPPSS 1, 3, 4 & 5 project.

No SMRs have been built. If any were of the NuScale type, they would produce the same high-level radioactive waste as older light water nuclear power plants and probably produce more per unit of energy generated. Other types, using different heat transfer fluids, would produce even more high-level radioactive waste.

Nor is there any reason to believe that SMRs could be built or operated to produce power at any reasonable cost. Instead, the diversion of government and private funds into SMR projects will starve renewable resources of the funds necessary to continue their rapid and economic development. The latest objective evaluation by an investment firm with worldwide operations and 175 years of experience is that utility-sized solar PV and wind farms are far less expensive than nuclear power. Lazard, Inc., summarizes its 2024 analysis in this chart. It shows solar PV at \$29-92/MWh, wind at \$27-73/MWh, and nuclear power at \$142-222/MWh. Thus, investment advisers think that nuclear power is already many times more expensive than solar PV or wind power, and the nuclear industry has a history of vastly understating its actual costs.

Levelized Cost of Energy Comparison—Version 17.0

Selected renewable energy generation technologies remain cost-competitive with conventional generation technologies under certain circumstances



The expressed will of the voters of Oregon should not be overturned, particularly as it has proved wise and prescient.

Oregon Progressive Party

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