

Submitter: John Perona  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB635

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for SB 635. I write in SUPPORT of the bill.

I am Professor (emeritus) of Chemistry at Portland State University and author of the climate change science/policy text for laypersons titled From Knowledge to Power, which has been widely circulated in Oregon.

This bill is a nice complement to HB 2038. I note that here the legislature is asking OSU to provide a balanced study of advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy generation, while HB 2038 asked ODOE to assess only the strengths of nuclear power. SB 635 also mandates a very broad, balanced study, including ecological, socioeconomic, and land use aspects of nuclear power, and analysis of cases where nuclear power was supported and developed in other jurisdictions. This bill thus fills important gaps not covered by HB 2038.

There are many reasons to support nuclear power. A robust nuclear power sector in Oregon would reduce the need for wind and solar power, which is ecologically beneficial because these latter technologies require large tracts of land, negatively impacting biodiversity. Similarly, nuclear power would eventually make it possible to retire some hydroelectric facilities, which have broadly negative impacts on fishing, recreation, ecosystem services, municipal water supplies and indigenous peoples' rights. And because of the very high capacity factors, nuclear fission plants will provide crucial baseload power, creating less need for electrical energy storage both on the larger grid and behind the meter.

It is difficult to see good reasons for why simply getting more information about nuclear power should be opposed by anyone. Are opponents of this bill afraid that when the benefits of nuclear power are clearly delineated, they may be seen to outweigh the costs? It seems to me that voting against this bill takes a stand against the use of rigorous science to inform policy making, and asks citizens and legislators to make important decisions about our energy future without offering them an opportunity to first become more fully informed.

Of course, nuclear fission is not all cotton candy and roses. It is neither clean nor renewable. There is a legitimate debate, which this bill will advance. But the benefits described above should be more than sufficient for anyone to recognize the value of a rigorous scientific study, to inform that debate.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT of SB 635.