

Oregon House approves landmark renewable energy act

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Twenty-five percent of state's electricity will come from renewable sources by 2025

SALEM, Ore. — House Democrats led the Oregon House Wednesday to approve the landmark Oregon Renewable Energy Act with broad bipartisan support

“This bill is about taking control of Oregon's energy future and using homegrown renewable resources to do so,” said State Representative Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland), Chair of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment, who championed the bill. “By cutting our reliance on imported fossil fuels, we stabilize rates for consumers and businesses, we cut our global warming pollution, and we build a new 21st-century economy that benefits communities statewide.”

The passage of Senate Bill 838 will result in Oregon generating 25 percent of its electricity from renewable resources by the year 2025. Renewable energy includes biomass, hydropower, and energy derived from wind, solar power, ocean waves and geothermal sources. The 25 percent standard laid out in the bill will phase in gradually, and smaller utilities have lower standards.

Oregon, Democrats say, is uniquely positioned to become a national—even international—leader in the alternative energy industry.

“This bill is not just a renewable energy initiative,” said State Representative Greg Macpherson (D-Lake Oswego). “It is an economic development initiative. Oregon produces essentially no fossil fuels, but it does have diverse renewable energy sources. Areas around the Columbia Gorge and in northeastern and southeastern Oregon have excellent wind sites. The Oregon coast has some of the best wave energy potential in the world. All of Oregon has great solar potential—even Oregon’s rainiest places get more sun than Germany, the current world leader. Many parts of Eastern Oregon have excellent geothermal energy potential. And Oregon’s forests are abundant in biomass material.”

Democrats also say the bill is a win/win for both rural and urban Oregonians.

“This is one of the best bills this session for rural Oregon,” said State Representative Brian Clem (D-Salem). “Renewable energy sources can be a shot in the arm for our ailing rural communities. Farmers, often struggling to make money and keep their land and their family in the farming business, have found a

new source of income in renewable energy. Farmers and rural landowners, for example, can make thousands of dollars per wind turbine on land that would bring in only hundreds of dollars in crops “ and they can keep farming right up to the base of the turbine.”

Ultimately, Democrats say, the bill sets Oregon on a new course.

“Today’s vote for a renewable energy standard points us down a visionary path toward an economy and culture in Oregon that will allow us to effectively respond to challenges facing health care, public safety, education and the environment now and in the future,” said State Representative Ben Cannon (D-Portland).

The bill, which has strong backing from the Governor, now moves to the Governor’s desk for signature.

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