

February 25, 2104

Senator Lee Beyer
Senator Bruce Starr
Senator Chris Edwards
Senator Fred Girod
Senator Rod Monroe
Senator Chuck Thomsen

Dear Chairman Beyer and members of the Committee,

Let's be honest. The reason that we're here today -- the reason for HB 4126 -- is to stifle the voices of common sense Oregonians who wish to recognize the fact that large-scale hydroelectric power is a renewable form of energy.

In 2007 the state legislature passed SB 838 which mandated a Renewable Portfolio Standard for energy producers who produce more than 3% of Oregon's power. It requires such producers to meet intermediate benchmarks on the way to achieving a goal of 25% renewable power. Inexplicably, large-scale hydroelectric power is not considered renewable power. At this time, the Umatilla Electric Cooperative is close to meeting that 3% threshold. Once they do, they will have to comply with interim performance tiers outlined in the Renewable Portfolio Standard leading up to the 25% renewable goal.

Because Umatilla Electric Cooperative wants to provide cheap, plentiful power for its customers, it introduced a ballot measure which would include large-scale hydroelectric power as a renewable energy source -- which it indeed is. I proudly circulated this petition. Despite the fact that it's a little difficult to explain, it was easy to convince people to sign.

HB 4126 restructures the guts of the Renewable Portfolio Standard, so that the Umatilla Electric Cooperative will once again be out of its scope. Since they receive this carve out, they will certainly drop their support for this ballot measure.

When the government makes a law that so offends the common sense and needlessly hurts commerce, that it has to then create carve outs for one company so that it need not comply with the law, and does so on the threat of a ballot measure that seriously threatens to effectively repeal the law, it may be time to re-evaluate the law itself.

Sometimes the free market does things that are unacceptable in society. When they do, common sense regulations are in order. But sometimes the free market does things that are positive, like large-scale hydroelectric power, which is cheap, clean and renewable. When they do, let's not punish them.

If you vote to pass this bill out of committee, or if you vote for it on the floor, please don't go back to your district and campaign on jobs creation. You just voted to sacrifice jobs and commerce on the altar of the false god of green power.

Sincerely,

Michael Nearman
Oregon Citizens' Lobby