

February 25, 2019

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2020.

My name is Suzanne Fouty and I have lived in Baker County for almost 17 years. During this time I started the Mollie Atwater and Friends spay/neuter assistance program for County cats and dogs and have run it for the last 13.5 years. In the process I have learned how hard it is for people in Baker County to make ends meet – many work multiple jobs, others can only find part-time or seasonal work, still others only have social security. As such I understand the concerns related to rising costs if House Bill 2020, known as the Clean Energy Jobs Bill, passes.

I also, however, have a strong background in water resources having recently retired from the Forest Service as the hydrologist for the Whitman Ranger District. Since 2000, Baker County has had 11 summers where conditions ranged from Abnormally Dry to Extreme Drought. The yearly Agri-Business magazine, the Capital Press, and the Baker City Herald all regularly talk about drought and the economic and emotional stress it puts on producers. Repeatedly the agricultural community goes to the State and Federal governments for financial help. Climate change mean that these droughts are going to be more extreme in the future and wildfires, larger, hotter and more frequent. The long-term NEGATIVE economic impact of these changes will be far greater than any short-term negative economic impact of HB 2020, and they have NO long-term benefits.

It is for these reasons that I support a strong Clean Energy Jobs Bill, one that brings funds and jobs to rural Oregon, one that jumpstarts innovation by leveling the economic playing field. The increased cost of fossil fuels and related goods and services will send a clear signal to the market place, to innovators that other energy options/innovations can finally truly be explored and implemented.

Fossil fuels are NOT cheap. They only appear cheap because the real costs of these fuels have been pawned off on us – in health issues, in polluted soil, water, and air, in ever more extreme weather with rising economic losses and increased requests for financial help. Bringing the price of fossil fuels more in line with its true costs, makes other energy sources and innovations more competitive and accelerates their arrival.

There will never be a perfect bill. There will always be tradeoffs, but the Clean Energy Jobs Bill is an economic opportunity for Baker County and Oregon. A strong bill, one that includes funding to help to rural Oregon innovate and offset increased costs during the transition, will allow industries like Ash Grove and agriculture to flourish and grow, and people to see their costs of living go down and quality of life go up. Let us demonstrate that we, unlike those in the past, have the vision and political will to tackle climate change and lead. I urge our representatives and senators to approve a strong and effective Clean Energy Jobs Bill.

THANK YOU.

Suzanne Fouty  
Baker City, OR