

HB 2855

A modest expansion of the OPUC's charter of responsibilities

This legislation directs the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) to consider important state policy priorities as it conducts its primary responsibility as an economic regulator of Oregon's investor-owned utility monopolies. HB 2855 calls on the OPUC as it is "deciding or deliberating toward a decision" to consider broad public policy and social values.

HB 2855 emerges from the dynamic self-evaluative process the OPUC undertook in 2018 under the direction of SB 978.

By including the priorities listed in HB 2855 cited below, in the Commission's charter, the Legislature conveys its expectation that the Commission consider the following as it conducts its vitally important work:

- Social Equity
- Environmental Justice
- Environmental Enhancement
- Greenhouse Gas Reductions
- Consumer Choice
- Diversity of Ownership of Electricity Generation
- Fulfillment of Oregon's Energy and Climate Policies, and
- Health of the State's Economy

The legislation leaves it to the Commission to determine how to develop and implement policies and rules, which reflect these expectations. After all, the independence of the OPUC is essential to the conduct of its responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Commission is part of the fabric of overall State policy; HB 2855 makes that linkage explicit.

In addition, HB 2855 instructs the Commission to promote two overarching principles captured in SB 978: first, "stimulating and promoting innovation and competition" and, second, "allowing and fostering broad participation in the regulatory process."

In response to prior legislative initiatives and at its own instigation, the OPUC has addressed many of the listed concerns. In fact, it acknowledged several in its Report to the Legislature as mandated in SB 978. In essence, HB 2855 aggregates and elevates those public policy priorities and recognized social values by placing them into the Commission's charter. The legislation reflects changing expectations for the OPUC without compromising its independence or removing its central responsibility as an economic regulator.

Northwest & Intermountain Power Producers Coalition, Renewable Energy
Coalition and Community Renewable Energy Association