

I am writing to oppose HB 2021. A bill amendment to replicate part of cap-and-trade, one of the most contentious legislative issues in recent years, was drafted and then discussed during a committee hearing without ever providing the language to the public beforehand or knowledge that it would be discussed during the committee.

The House Energy and Environment Committee allowed public testimony on an unpublished amendment to HB 2021, introduced by Pam Marsh (D-Ashland) who also chairs the committee. The amendment introduces sweeping legislation that seeks to impose costly regulations on the state's supply of electricity. Special interest groups testified at length in support of a "-5 amendment" that was not made publicly available to everyday Oregonians. Republican lawmakers on the committee received the draft language at 11am during session before the 1pm hearing, leaving them little time to read the amendment. Republicans criticized the move as the antithesis of transparency and the exact opposite of how the legislative process should be conducted.

Despite an hour and a half of prepared testimonies from special interests, the amendment will only receive a half hour of testimony on Wednesday now that it is public knowledge.

Prior to the start of the 2021 Legislative Session, the majority insisted that it would be the most transparent session despite keeping the public out of the building. This recent move by Democrats to quietly replicate a portion of cap-and-trade with an amendment behind closed doors calls that claim into question.

"The last thing we should do during this precarious pandemic session is conceive, draft and finalize legislation behind closed doors," said House Republican Leader Christine Drazan. "Discussing a contentious proposal in a committee without ever providing it to the public beforehand is not transparent. It's a false formality with the intention of passing laws that have zero public input. That's breaking a promise we made to Oregonians ahead of this virtual session."

While representatives from environmental justice organizations, investor-owned utility companies and even Democratic members of the committee repeatedly expressed support for an unpublished -5 amendment, members of the public were left in the dark. Hours after today's hearing, the amendment was still not posted on the Oregon Legislative Information System website.

THIS IS SO WRONG!

Marlene Acker, Nehalem