

Submitter: John Perona
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1597

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for SB1597. I am NEUTRAL on the bill.

I am Professor (emeritus) of Chemistry at Portland State University and author of the climate change science/policy text for laypersons titled From Knowledge to Power, which has been widely circulated in Oregon.

As stated in oral testimony by Senator Frederick, this bill is squarely addressing nuclear power. I don't oppose the bill outright because, in general, increased transparency for consumers about electricity costs is plainly beneficial, allowing for an informed appraisal about costs and benefits, and promoting public participation in the oversight of electric utilities.

However, as a healthy climate advocate and strong supporter of nuclear energy, I also have some substantial concerns:

--The bill is not needed. Already commercial nuclear power is effectively banned in Oregon because of ballot measures passed 46 years ago. Unless the ballot measure is repealed, this bill is without effect.

--The bill contributes to the notion that nuclear power needs to be singled out and treated more stringently than other forms of electricity generation. Senator Frederick's comments about Hanford are really not on point, because the contamination there arises from the poorly controlled nuclear weapons programs during the Manhattan Project. Nuclear waste from some 95 operating commercial US reactors has been stored safely on site at over 50 locations, ever since commercial nuclear power began during the Eisenhower administration. This track record suggests that it might be time to rethink the idea that commercial nuclear power is unsafe.

-There is potential that this bill would be used as leverage by those opposing commercial nuclear power, to block new construction in the event that the ballot measure is overthrown. Yet as everyone knows, electricity costs and demand are both sharply increasing, and our climate goals are receding. We need to be promoting all forms of carbon-free electricity, not putting roadblocks in front of them. And nuclear power is not just carbon-free, but is also a source of firm power that operates with capacity factors above 90%.

-If more transparency is wanted in the regulation of electric utilities, which I would support, then the legislation promoting this should be written broadly to apply to all forms of electricity generation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am NEUTRAL on this bill.