

February 03 2026

RE: Oppose to HB4046 Nuclear Energy Study Fund

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the Climate, Energy, and Environment Committee:

My name is Kathaleen B Parker, from Senate District 10 in South Salem, and I am in opposition to the writing inside HB4046 which asked to conduct a study on nuclear energy, including advanced nuclear reactors.

Personally, my preference is an ENERGY MIX of Solar Project Installations & Wind Project Installations. “You do not require a constant supply of new materials just to survive.”~

The Best Thing That Could Happen to the Energy Industry | Matt Tilleard |

[https://youtu.be/2ZlfqLDG\\_Qs?si=qJsy2NMC92z-Dai](https://youtu.be/2ZlfqLDG_Qs?si=qJsy2NMC92z-Dai)

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“Nuclear is a super massive industrial project, and has high upfront costs to building new reactors. It also takes a trained workforce with experience to build projects consistently on schedule and on budget. After decades of building bridges and skyscrapers, high speed rail and ultra high voltage lines, we know that China excels at building huge infrastructure quickly. A crucial piece of the decarbonization puzzle is getting the power where it needs to go. A conventional AC power cable loses a lot of electricity over the miles. Powerline infrastructure is needed for ultra high-voltage power lines which reduce the wastage that may happen. There are only two countries in the world with these high voltage cables in use - China (25) and Brazil who has (2). (cost is hundreds of billion of dollars). Nuclear is a super massive industrial project, and has high upfront costs to building new reactors. It also takes a trained workforce with experience to build projects consistently on schedule and on budget.”~

How China Plans to Win the Future of Energy | Bloomberg (03/15/2022)

<https://youtu.be/b1LQSezKxnA?si=otVsi6NJijeGWv5I>

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Developing the Oregon Energy Strategy took two years, according to a news release from the state energy department. It included modeling scenarios that would prioritize affordability and reliability in the state’s energy sector while meeting demand and energy policy and climate change objectives.

With the release of the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE)’s new Oregon Energy Strategy, the state now has a roadmap for a clean, resilient and more affordable future.

Officials made adjustments to changes in federal policy under President Donald Trump, who has in the first ten months of his second term attempted to claw back billions of congressionally approved federal clean energy investments.

Although Oregon has among the largest data center markets in the world, which drove electricity consumption in the state up 20% between 2013 and 2023, I feel being open to reasonable reviews when attention is being specified is best.

I agree with “Keep Oregon Nuclear Free” coalition which is calling for amendments in the study to add-in language that ensures the study looks at both the advantages and disadvantages of in-state nuclear

generation, remove the tight study turnaround deadline, and include transparency around what funding streams are funding the study.

#### **“Keep Oregon Nuclear Free” coalition argues about:**

**Waste Storage Problem:** There is no permanent repository in the U.S. for high-level nuclear waste, and it often remains on-site indefinitely. This waste could threaten Oregon’s rivers, aquifers, farmlands, and rural communities, especially in seismically and hydrologically sensitive areas.

Long-term issues: By focusing on the "advantages" of nuclear energy, the bill sidesteps the profound and unresolved challenge of managing nuclear waste safely over the long term.

#### **Costs**

Nuclear projects frequently exceed budgets by billions and face years and sometimes decades of delays. These costs are passed on to taxpayers and utility ratepayers.

#### **Big Tech Calls the Shots**

The proposed bill contains concerning provisions that imply the report will recommend supporting nuclear, such as “measures for overcoming challenges to developing nuclear energy projects” and “explicit provisions in the bill authorizing ODOE to receive money for all public and private sources to complete the study”.

#### **Regulatory Gaps**

Necessary rigorous safety assessments were not outlined sufficiently in the bill, illustrating a biased study which could gloss over critical safety gaps (especially in a state like Oregon where rural communities might be exposed to disproportionate risks and disproportionate access to emergency response).

I am opposed to HB4046 if the advocacy group feels that the safety and financial has risks (in the current bill). Also, an unexpected alteration from the White House, Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> altered the current nuclear safety rules. I will paste some of the news that ‘NPR’ station acquired below:

#### **The Trump administration has secretly rewritten nuclear safety rules (1/28/26) NPR**

*The Trump administration has overhauled a set of nuclear safety directives and shared them with the companies it is charged with regulating, without making the new rules available to the public, according to documents obtained exclusively by NPR. The sweeping changes were made to accelerate development of a new generation of nuclear reactor designs. They occurred over the fall and winter at the Department of Energy, which is currently overseeing a program to build at least three new experimental commercial nuclear reactors by July 4 of this year. The changes are to departmental orders, which dictate requirements for almost every aspect of the reactors' operations — including safety systems, environmental protections, site security and accident investigations.*

*NPR obtained copies of over a dozen of the new orders, none of which is publicly available. The orders slash hundreds of pages of requirements for security at the reactors. They also loosen protections for groundwater and the environment and eliminate at least one key safety role. The new orders cut back on requirements for keeping records, and they raise the amount of radiation a worker can be exposed to before an official accident investigation is triggered.*

*Over 750 pages were cut from the earlier versions of the same orders, according to NPR's analysis, leaving only about one-third of the number of pages in the original documents.*

*The new generation of nuclear reactor designs, known as small modular reactors, are being backed by billions in private equity, venture capital and public investments. Backers of the reactors, including tech giants Amazon, Google and Meta, have said they want the reactors to one day supply cheap, reliable power for artificial intelligence. (Amazon and Google are financial supporters of NPR.) Outside experts who helped review the rules for NPR criticized the decision to revise them without any public knowledge.*

"I would argue that the Department of Energy relaxing its nuclear safety and security standards in secret is not the best way to engender the kind of public trust that's going to be needed for nuclear to succeed more broadly," said Christopher Hanson, who chaired the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from 2021 to 2025, when he was fired by President Trump.

"To say that it's aggressive is a pretty big understatement," said Kathryn Huff, a professor of plasma and nuclear engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who served as head of the DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy from 2022 to 2024. Research reactors typically take at least two years to build from the point when construction begins, Huff said. Few — if any — have been built on the timescale laid out in the executive order.

The rules governing DOE reactors are a mix of federal regulations and directives known as "orders." Changes to federal regulations require public notice and comment, but DOE's orders can be legally changed internally with no public comment period. The orders have historically been made public via a DOE database.

#### Rules rewritten

The documents reviewed by NPR show just how extensive the streamlining effort has been. The new orders strip out some guiding principles of nuclear safety, notably a concept known as "As Low As Reasonably Achievable" (ALARA), which requires nuclear reactor operators to keep levels of radiation exposure below the legal limit whenever they can. The ALARA standard has been in use for decades at both the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Removing the standard means that new reactors could be constructed with less concrete shielding, and workers could work longer shifts, potentially receiving higher doses of radiation, according to Tison Campbell, a partner at K&L Gates who previously worked as a lawyer at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Thank you for your time and dedication for a better Oregon.

Sincerely,

Kathaleen B Parker, Willamette Valley



"The best outcomes happen when sustainability is integrated from the start of design."

—Kirsten Ritchie, Gensler's Climate Action & Sustainability leader

<https://www.gensler.com/expertise/climate-action-sustainability-services>

#### NOTES:

The Trump administration has secretly rewritten nuclear safety rules January 28, 2026

<https://www.npr.org/2026/01/28/nx-s1-5677187/nuclear-safety-rules-rewritten-trump>

NPR Geoff Brumfiel Source: U.S. Department of Energy Credit: Compiled by Geoff Brumfiel and Arundathi Nair/NPR, graphic by Brent Jones/NPR