

Submitter: Ryan Beam
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4046

Dear Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to oppose HB 4046, which would direct the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) to study nuclear energy. This bill threatens to undermine Oregon's long-standing, voter-approved moratorium on new nuclear power and diverts attention and resources from real climate solutions.

In 1980, Oregon voters enacted a moratorium on new commercial nuclear reactors until a national high-level nuclear waste repository exists and voters again give their consent. That condition has still not been met. There is no permanent repository for high-level nuclear waste in the United States, and radioactive waste—whether from conventional reactors or so-called small modular reactors—remains on-site indefinitely, posing long-term risks to rivers, aquifers, farmland, and nearby communities, many of which are rural or low-income.

HB 4046 is particularly concerning given last session's coordinated effort to weaken the moratorium through thirteen pro-nuclear bills. While those bills failed, this study bill continues the same agenda. The bill mandates an unrealistically short timeline and allows funding from federal and private sources, including corporations that stand to profit from nuclear development. This raises serious concerns about bias, especially where the bill emphasizes overcoming barriers to nuclear development rather than objectively assessing risks.

Nuclear power carries well-documented safety, environmental, and public health risks. Extreme weather, seismic activity, and human error can lead to catastrophic accidents. Radioactive waste remains dangerous for thousands to millions of years, and radiation exposure is linked to cancer, genetic damage, organ failure, and death. These unresolved dangers cannot be dismissed. The devastating cost of uranium mining, processing, and storage on affected communities must be considered in any analysis, regardless of where in the country and world those activities would happen.

The financial risks are also significant. Nuclear projects frequently run billions of dollars over budget and take decades to complete, costs ultimately borne by taxpayers and ratepayers. Meanwhile, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and storage are already cheaper, safer, and deployable now. Studying nuclear energy diverts ODOE's limited capacity away from implementing the Oregon Energy Strategy and scaling proven solutions.

Finally, the push for nuclear energy is being driven largely by Big Tech companies seeking to power energy-intensive data centers. Oregon's communities should not be asked to sacrifice safety, water resources, or democratic decision-making to meet corporate demand.

I urge you to reject HB 4046 and keep Oregon focused on equitable, affordable, and truly renewable climate solutions.

Sincerely,
Ryan Beam
Portland Resident