



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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Oregon House Votes for Cleaner Air, More Jobs, and More Choices for Consumers

Senate Bill 324 passes the House and heads to Gov. Brown

Oregon consumers will have more choices at the fuel pump, kids will be able to breathe cleaner air, and all Oregonians will benefit from the development of an emerging clean fuels industry under a bill passed today by the Oregon House of Representatives.

The passage of Senate Bill 324 lifts the sunset on Oregon's Clean Fuels Program, which will reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels by 10% over the next 10 years. Transportation is one of the leading causes of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, contributing to climate change.

"We all want ensure that we're giving our kids a future in which they can thrive," said Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson (D-East Portland), who carried the bill on the House floor. "We're already seeing the negative impacts of climate change on our natural environment, on our businesses, and in public health. If we do nothing to mitigate this threat, the damage is only going to get exponentially worse."

"Oregonians understand that climate change is an urgent threat to our livelihood, and they are asking us to take action," Rep. Vega Pederson added.

The Clean Fuels Program is the result of six years of research and an open, public process. The program was first passed by the legislature in 2009 with a sunset of 2015; SB 324 lifts the sunset and begins implementation of the program.

The program will provide a boost for the emerging alternative fuels market in Oregon, creating a homegrown fuels industry independent from global fossil fuel interests. Clean Fuels will help create more stability and dependability in the marketplace. Importantly, the program contains protections from consumers to hold costs down—no such protection exists in the fossil fuels market, as evidence by the 70-cent rise in gas prices since the legislative session began.

“Too often, we hear arguments that the economy and the environment are at odds, but we should always be looking to improve our environment in ways that boost our local economies,” says Rep. Tobias Read (D-Beaverton). “With the Clean Fuels Program, we’ll incentivize a local, homegrown industry to grow. We have local businesses ready to expand to meet the demands of the low-carbon market, they just need the stability this program provides.”

Senate Bill 324 received support from business groups like the Oregon Business Association and the Main Street Alliance of Oregon.

The implementation of the Clean Fuels Program will provide a more immediate help to communities across the state by reducing air pollution, which disproportionately impacts low-income communities. Cleaner air means lower health care costs for ailments like asthma and COPD, especially among children and senior citizens.

House Republicans attempted to replace the Clean Fuels Program with a minority report that would have dissolved the program, gutted the budget of the Energy Trust of Oregon, and would have required a three-fifths majority because it created a tax. The minority report failed.

“For the health and prosperity of the next generation, we have a responsibility to act,” said Rep. Peter Buckley (D-Ashland). “But the destructive impacts of climate change aren’t just in some far off future—they are happening now. This bill is a recognition that even if we alone can’t solve the problem, we have to do what we can to limit our contribution to it.”

After a lengthy debate on the House floor, Senate Bill 324 passed by a vote of 31-29 and heads to Governor Brown for her signature.

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