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Senate Democrats Pass Controversial Renewable Energy Mandate, Send Significant Utility Rate Hikes to Oregonians

Oregonians Could See Electricity Bills Could Spike 4% Per Year

Salem, Ore. - Today, Senate Democrats passed a costly new energy mandate that will raise electricity rates by 40% while doing little to reduce pollution from carbon emissions in Oregon. The chamber considered SB 1547-B, which was originally drafted as a benign bill to clarify the definition of "public utility" and stuffed by a House committee with the controversial "Coal to Clean" energy plan. Senate Republicans introduced two amendments to protect ratepayers, including low-income Oregon families and vulnerable fixed-income seniors, with both motions rejected by Senate Democrats. The final bill also passed the Oregon Senate in a partisan vote.

"Despite concerns from the Public Utility Commission about significant hikes in cost for ratepayers, numerous editorials questioning the backdoor deal making that resulted in this energy mandate, and repeated attempts to slow down the process to fully vet the program, Senate Democrats chose to move forward with the most costly and inefficient version of this renewable energy mandate," said Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). "Senate Republicans will not support a complex and controversial new mandate that will send Oregonians' electric bills skyrocketing. Oregonians are being sold a bill of goods with claims that this new mandate will reduce carbon emissions, when in reality we will see no improvement in pollution from emissions."

Senate Republicans moved to consider two amendments to SB 1547-B, which would have:

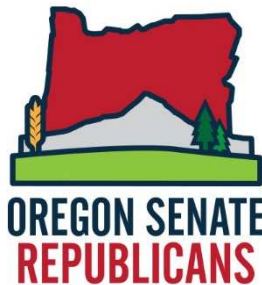
- Restored the bill to its original form, preventing the hijacking of a benign technical fix by out-of-state special interests (-B22);
- Restored Senator Alan Olsen's original bill, a benign technical fix, and added hydroelectric power to the Renewable Portfolio Standard, allowing utilities to use renewable energy readily available instead of being forced to invest in high-priced, ineffective, taxpayer subsidized renewable resources (-B24).

"Under this new mandate, utilities will see costs grow up to 4% per year, which will be passed on to consumers in Oregon," said Senator Alan Olsen (R-Canby). "As energy prices increase, we will see the cost of electricity, groceries, and other goods and services increase, too. We should be limiting the cost to ratepayers and adding the renewable energy we already have--hydroelectric power from our rivers--instead of passing an expensive mandate that only benefits out-of-state green energy special interests."

SB 1547-B now goes to Governor Brown's desk for her signature.

"Senate Republicans sent a letter to Governor Brown asking her to put this new mandate on hold until we have more information about how this will hurt working Oregon families," said Ferrioli. "We hope she will honor our request and stand up for ratepayers across the state who can't afford to choose between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table."

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