



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jonathan Lockwood
Communications Director
971-645-2140
Jonathan.Lockwood@OregonLegislature.gov

Olsen set to shine a light on shadowy Energy Trust

SALEM, Ore.-Today in the Senate Business and Transportation Committee, state Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, [expressed urgency in passing a package of bills he is sponsoring](#) to increase transparency and accountability in the Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO). [Senate Bills 659](#) and [Senate Bill 656](#) will require a performance audit of the ETO on a frequent basis. [Senate Bill 657](#) reduces the public purpose charge funneled to the ETO from three percent to two, and annually caps the total amount funneled at \$150 million.

"The Legislature needs to ensure that ratepayers are receiving the benefits they are promised," said Olsen. "Oregonians have repeatedly said they do not think the government is as transparent or as accountable as they deserve. This bill says, 'we are listening.'"

The state's largest investor-owned utilities currently charge Oregonians a three percent public purpose charge each month. Those funds are funneled to the ETO which is under the control of the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC). The ETO began in Mar. 2002, and was charged with investing in cost-effective electric energy efficiency.

The ETO was originally intended to help pay the above-market costs of renewable energy resources, implement market transformation programs, and to help deliver service with low administrative and program support costs.

Utilities charge additional sums of money too. These utilities charge Oregonians on top of the public purpose charge, with some Oregonians paying up to 10 percent.

Olsen says the issue centers on the fact the ETO budget has ballooned from \$19 million to \$198 million and it has become what critics call "out-of-control." Over the years, there have been efforts to raid the ETO for legislative projects. But, what is most concerning about the ETO, says Olsen, is that it is set up as a

non-profit organization and therefore has no oversight except for the PUC.

"The Legislature created the taxing authority for this system and it should have the ability and seize the opportunity to examine the accounting for the ETO," said Olsen. "It is an outrage the ETO operates in the shadows. It needs to be audited by a non-biased firm and those audits need to be regularly executed so Oregonians can see some accountability."

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For media requests please contact Communications Director Jonathan Lockwood at 971-645-2140, or Jonathan.Lockwood@OregonLegislature.gov.