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Senate unanimously passes adding woody biomass as green energy

Bill will help reduce carbon emissions and create jobs

SALEM, Ore.-Republicans say adding woody biomass as a recognized source of green energy technologies will help reduce carbon emissions and create jobs in rural Oregon. The proposal, [Senate Bill 634](#), passed the Senate today with unanimous bipartisan support.

"We need to reimagine energy policy and modernize it so our regulations reflect it is 2017. We should be leveraging our current resources to achieve the greatest outcomes possible," said Senate Republican Deputy Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend. "We can create tremendous impact in rural Oregon too by simply allowing developers to use renewable energy that includes woody biomass."

Senate Bill 634 adds woody biomass as a fuel for space or water heating or as a fuel for combined heat and power systems. Per the Oregon Energy Department, [wood is still the largest biomass energy resource today](#). Oregon has 17 woody biomass power facilities, primarily in the wood-products industry, and 21 other facilities including schools and hospitals, which use woody biomass to provide heat.

"Rural Oregon has been hard-hit by economic strain, natural disasters and urban-driven public policy that doesn't account for Oregonians throughout the state," said Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli, of John Day. "We can help improve the lives of rural Oregonians by using local renewable energy to create jobs in rural communities."

The bill will also help build new markets for forest restoration byproducts and it helps support forest management. The bill will help keep energy dollars in local economies across the state.

"Using biomass for energy also supports Oregon's investments in forest health," said Dylan Kruse, Sustainable Northwest policy director. "For many areas of the state, the best energy choice may be biomass, and Senate Bill 634 will make sure this option is on the table."

Currently, Oregon law requires 1.5 percent of the total price of a public improvement contract for new buildings and major renovations to be spent on green energy technologies.

Oregon is a leader in developing alternative energy sources. [Senate Bill 12-1533](#) allowed the use of geothermal energy to satisfy the 1.5 percent requirement. [House Bill 15-3329](#) modified the standard for geothermal energy resources to qualify as a green energy technology if the water used as a heat source is more than 128 degrees and the system is used for a public-school building.

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