

POWER OF COMMUNITY UPDATE

“The State legislative session is on a fast track,” says Sandy Flicker, Executive Director of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association (ORECA). Sandy is one of the lobbyists for the statewide association that coordinates the Power of Community (POC) program. Thanks to electric cooperative (co-op) members like you, POC reaches 6,000 households strong across Oregon.

The new majority of Democrats is anxious to prove that they can run the legislative process better than the Republicans have in the past. This means making sure all legislators and special interest groups stick to strict deadlines for introducing bills. February 26th was the last day a bill could be introduced.

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle did stun most pundits when they agreed to increase corporate taxes, put money away in a “rainy day” fund, and cut estate taxes. The bipartisan measure would put \$250 million into the rainy day savings account (money that would have been returned to large corporations); generate approximately \$75 million for public services from new corporate taxes; and, raise the minimum threshold on the current estate tax from \$1 million to \$2 million. Two losers in the deal were Governor Ted Kulongoski’s funding for Head Start and college financial aid, which will have to go through the funding process like any other measure.



Oregon Rural Electric
Cooperative Association
707 13th Street SE, Suite 200
Salem, OR 97301



March 2007

Volume 3 Issue 3

Inside this edition:

- From the Governor...
- Helmets
- Propane Update
- Cell Phone Usage
- Metals Theft
- E-mail Your E-mail

Brought to you by:



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE STATE CAPITOL?

ORECA has been working successfully to obtain exemptions for electric co-ops in bills being introduced that impact costs and operations for utilities. Priority one is to protect local control, or your right to decide what is in the best interest of your electric co-op through your locally elected board of directors.

From the Governor...

Governor Kulongoski, working with State Senator Brad Avakian (D-Portland and Chair of the Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee) released a draft of their Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) bill requiring utilities to purchase 25% of their power from renewable resources by 2025. The bill would impact ORECA's largest members.

ORECA is working to exempt all co-ops out of this bill, and also has introduced its own bill - Senate Bill (SB) 19 - that exempts electric co-ops from this costly requirement, and keeps member control of local electricity portfolios.



Another ORECA bill would classify hydro as a qualifying renewable resource. The reason for the bill is that the Governor is not willing to consider hydro a renewable

resource. His goal is to stimulate the development of new renewables, like more wind power. Co-ops already use over 70% of clean, renewable hydro in their fuel mix. Co-op members have paid for the hydro system and continue to pay 30% of their electricity bill for fish mitigation programs. ORECA believes that co-op members deserve to be recognized for their outstanding contribution to decreasing greenhouse gases.

Helmets

House Bill (HB) 2062 mandates helmet usage for anyone operating a motorcycle, or all terrain vehicle (ATV). Co-op employees already wear OSHA approved hard hats, so this bill is redundant for those patrolling their distribution systems in ATVs to fix downed power lines, or clear brush and debris as part of regular maintenance activities. ORECA is seeking an exemption for co-ops.

Propane Update

Some co-ops in Oregon have diversified, selling propane as well as electricity. SB 375 would require every residence or business to upgrade their old propane furnaces to ones that are 90% efficient. ORECA is seeking an exemption to this bill for the unnecessary cost burden it would place on propane consumers.

Cell Phone Usage

Outlawing cell phone and two-way radio usage while driving is a hot bill this year. However, SB 293 would adversely impact a cooperative's ability to communicate with its crew while enroute to an outage, or similar service call. ORECA is seeking an exemption to this bill, as well.



Metals Theft

ORECA is a member of a coalition dedicated to stopping scrap metals theft. This is a particular problem for utilities that have seen a rise in metals theft from their distribution systems and work yards. Often metal is sold to scrap dealers for drug money. HB 2344 is official, and ORECA will be working hard for its passage.

E-mail Your E-mail

Power of Community is working hard to collect email addresses for our grassroots members. Email is the best way to keep you current on the progress being made with certain bills and legislative alerts. Please make sure that we have your correct email on file by sending your name and the name of your electric co-op to oreca@oreca.org Thank you for being a part of our great grassroots movement!