

NAACP: Oregon's clean energy economy is leaving minorities behind

TRACY LOEW
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Members of Oregon's NAACP want to ensure that people of color benefit from the state's efforts to switch to a greener, more environmentally conscious economy.

"Oregon has been a leader in creating opportunities around climate change and climate justice initiatives. However, people of color, low-income people, have not been beneficiaries of these efforts," Jo Ann Hardesty, president of the Portland NAACP chapter, said at a news conference June 12.

"What we believe is that middle-class and upper-class white communities are really taking advantage of this new emerging economy," she said. "If we don't now develop a pathway for people of color, low-income people, people coming back from our prisons, to be able to be trained in this new economy, once again we will be left behind."

The state's four NAACP chapters re-



Presidents of the four branches in Oregon of the NAACP, from left, Frederick Edwards, Benny Williams, at podium, Jo Anne Hardesty and Eric Richardson attend a news conference.

ANDREW SELSKY/AP

leased a report Monday measuring Oregon's progress toward meeting state-level climate and energy policy goals set by the national association.

It shows that Oregon is meeting those targets, which include:

- » Renewable Portfolio Standards, which require electric companies to supply a portion of ener-

gy from renewable energy sources.

- » Energy efficiency resource standards, which require utility companies to meet energy savings targets through a portfolio of energy efficiency programs.

- » Net metering standards, which require electric companies to

provide retail credit for net renewable energy produced by a consumer.

- » Local hire provisions, requirements that contractors awarded publicly funded projects hire a certain percentage of local residents.

- » Policies requiring publicly funded projects use a percentage of Minority Business Enter-

prise-designated suppliers.

But the state has the opportunity to go even further, said Eric Richardson, president of the Eugene/Springfield NAACP branch. And it must ensure that low-income and minority communities benefit.

"The NAACP stands with the African American community in demanding that the coming green energy economy be supported and used as a vehicle to right the many wrongs inflicted upon the poor and communities of color in the last century," Richardson said.

The report calls for Oregon to increase Renewable Portfolio Standard levels, make its voluntary energy efficiency resource standard mandatory and raise capacity limits in its net metering standard.

It also recommends the state offer energy modernization incentives that are more accessible to communities of color and low- to moderate-income households.

Oregon should collect data to show which com-

munities benefit most from those incentives, Hardesty said.

NAACP members lobbied legislators on the issue June 12. The Oregon branches also have identified three priority bills this session, Hardesty said:

House Bill 2004 would prohibit no-cause evictions after the first six months of tenancy. It narrowly passed the House and has an uncertain future in the Senate.

House Bill 2355 would require the state to record data concerning officer-initiated pedestrian and traffic stop and to develop a standardized racial profiling complaint form. It also reduces penalties for certain drug-related misdemeanors. It is in the Joint Ways and Means Public Safety subcommittee.

Senate Bill 496 would require grand jury proceedings to be recorded. It is in the Joint Ways and Means committee.

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Tech firms to state lawmakers: Please tax us

DIANE DIETZ
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Business leaders from a Pearl District tech company to a Dallas pizzeria asked lawmakers June 13 to adopt a new tax on businesses.

Carol Christ, who owns the Dallas Figaro's Pizza with her husband, urged lawmakers to pass a proposed gross receipts tax so Oregon kindergartners don't attend school with 28 in a classroom as her granddaughter did this year.

Mat Ellis, CEO of Cloudability Inc. in the Portland Pearl District, asked lawmakers to pass the tax so he no longer loses young, highly skilled employees who love Oregon until their children grow to school age.

"If you want to foster a vibrant tech industry in this state — and the well-paid jobs that come with it — you'll have to make the necessary investments, which begins with an appropriately funded education system," Ellis told the Joint Committee on Tax Reform at the Capitol.

The disparate pair testified in favor of a gross receipts tax on business proposed recently by House Speaker Tina Ko-

tek and Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton. The tax would raise an estimated \$890 million in proceeds in 2017-2019 that would largely go to public schools.

Businesses with sales over \$3 million would pay the tax at rates depending on their sector: .75 percent for services, .35 percent for retail, .25 percent for wholesale, .15 percent for agriculture, forestry and fishing and .48 for other businesses such as construction and manufacturing.

Businesses with \$150,000 to \$3 million in sales would pay a flat \$250. Businesses under \$150,000 wouldn't even have to file.

The Kotek/Hass plan would phase in after a one-year increase in corporate income taxes. In 2019, the gross receipts tax would start and the corporate income tax would be abolished.

The hearing was scheduled to resume June 13 with dozens submitting written testimony or signing up to appear before the panel. The committee has not yet scheduled a vote.

Proponents say the tax is the best chance of curbing what they say is a structural problem with

Oregon's tax system, which left the state \$1.4 billion short for the coming biennium despite record tax receipts. Opponents say instead that the Legislature has a spending problem and the remedy is to cut the budget.

The Oregon Farm Bureau testified against the gross receipts tax. The organization is opposed to "anything that separates the obligation to pay from the ability to pay," lobbyist Jenny Dresler told the committee.

About 65,000 Oregon families are farm bureau members.

Dresler lauded the committee for lowering the rate that agriculture, forestry, and fishing would pay below all other types of business at .15 percent but that still wasn't enough to win her organization's support.

"Would some of this heartburn go away if we just exempted agriculture?" Hass asked the lobbyist.

"We would still have some issues," she said. Farm stands would still be liable for the tax.

Oregon National Federation of Independent Business state director Anthony Smith also spoke in opposition to the bill. When margins are slim

for the group's 7,000 Oregon business members, every dollar counts.

But Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, challenged how well the NFIB represented the impact on small businesses.

Smith, who works as a small business consultant in Eastern Oregon, said he thinks of all the businesses on main street Heppner and, with the exception of Les Schwab, none would be liable for the tax.

"This is pretty darn good for a lot of small businesses, especially in small, rural communities," he said.

Retired entrepreneur John Calhoun, who said he worked two decades in financial management at Intel, said the state should tax total sales instead of profits, as the existing corporate income tax does, because that would eliminate the incentive to hide profits.

"As long as a tax is based on income, large corporations will continue to find ways to avoid paying taxes," Calhoun said. "While I was at Intel, I helped justify shifting profits to our Asian tax haven. I know how it's done."

The hearing room during the 1 1/2 hours of

morning testimony was packed with business leaders as well as school board members and parents, who testified that Oregon schools have the largest class sizes in the nation, one of the shortest school years and among the lowest high school graduation rates.

Judah McAuley, director of engineering at the Portland tech firm Tree-Top Commons, said he's a fifth generation Oregonian. When he grew up in the '80s and '90s, the schools provided enrichment, including exposure to technology. His curiosity was nourished, he said.

His fifth-grade daughter's education suffers in comparison, he said.

"It's a scary thing raising a kid right now in Oregon," he said. "It makes me worry about the future of our state."

Details of the gross receipts tax proposal, according to the Legislative Revenue Office:

- » The gross receipts tax (also called commercial activity tax) would take effect on Jan. 1, 2019.

- » All entity types, including limited liability companies, would be required to pay

- » Businesses with less than \$150,000 in receipts

would not have to file

- » Businesses with more than \$150,000 and less than \$3 million would pay \$250

- » Businesses with more than \$3 million in receipts would pay these rates:

- » .75 percent for services
- » .35 for retail
- » .25 for wholesale
- » .15 for agriculture, forestry and fishing
- » .48 for all others

- » Pass through entities would get a 50 percent credit in 2019 and that would drop to 25 percent in succeeding years

- » Personal income tax rates would drop beginning in 2019:

- » 5 percent to 4.5 percent
- » 7 percent to 6.5 percent

- » 9 percent to 8.75 percent (For single filers making less than \$25,000)

- » 9 percent unchanged (For those making more than \$25,000)

- » 9.9 percent unchanged

- » Temporary increase in corporate income tax rates to 8 and 9 percent (up from 6.6 and 6.7 percent)

- » In 2019, eliminate the corporate income tax

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Preliminary Determination for Water Right Transfer T-12445

T-12445 filed by JB Instant Lawn, c/o Jensen Family LLC, 5289 Blue Grass Lane, Silverton, OR, 97381, proposes additional points of appropriation under Certificate 44105. The right allows the use of 1.46 cubic feet per second (cfs), being 0.64 cfs from Well No. 1 and 0.82 cfs from Well No. 2 in Sec. 35, T6S, R2W, WM for irrigation in Sects. 34 and 35, T6S, R2W, WM and Sects. 2 and 3, T7S, R2W, WM. The applicant proposes additional points of appropriation in Sects. 34 and 35, T6S, R2W, WM. The Water Resources Department proposes to approve the transfer, based on the requirements of ORS Chapter 540 and OAR 690-380-5000.

Any person may file, jointly or severally, a protest or standing statement within 30 days after the last date of newspaper publication of this notice, 06/28/2017. Call (503) 986-0807 to obtain additional information. If no protests are filed, the Department will issue a final order consistent with the preliminary determination. Silverton Appeal June 21 & 28, 2017

Former Gov. Kitzhaber, First Lady Cylvia Hayes won't be charged

TRACY LOEW
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The federal government has dropped its investigation into allegations that former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber and First Lady Cylvia Hayes used their positions for personal gain.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon, the Justice Department's Criminal Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service announced Friday they will not bring any federal criminal charges.

The former governor and his fiancée were under federal investigation for 28 months.

In a statement posted on his Facebook page Friday afternoon, Kitzhaber said investigators came to the same conclusion he started with: "There was nothing to pursue."

"As I have said from the beginning, I did not resign because I was guilty of any wrongdoing but rather because the media frenzy around these questions kept me from being the effective leader I needed to be," he wrote.

Whitney Boise, Hayes' lawyer, did not respond to an interview request.

Kitzhaber resigned in February 2015, barely five weeks into his inauguration for a historic fourth term, but both he and Hayes insisted they had done nothing wrong.

The influence-peddling probe



HIRO KOMAE/AP

In this Sept. 13, 2011 file photo, Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, right, and his companion, Cylvia Hayes, attend a ceremony in Tokyo.

their support.

"I'm glad to see this long investigation come to a close," Courtney said Friday. "Now, Gov. Kitzhaber and his family can put this trying time behind."

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum had opened an investigation into the allegations in February 2015, but deferred the inquiry until the completion of the federal investigation.

In February 2017, Rosenblum said she was closing the state investigation because the state statute of limitations to bring charges was running out.

Kitzhaber has been seeking a return to public life. In January, he spoke about health care to a packed house at the Salem City Club.

"So I'm back," Kitzhaber's Facebook statement continues. "I intend to continue to do what I've been doing for most of my adult life: trying to help Oregon deal with the challenges we face in a way that moves us beyond the current division and polarization and brings us back together as a community."

Hayes, too has been seeking to regrow her consulting career, most recently creating a Cannabis Industry Services Program to "empower socially responsible cannabis entrepreneurs and enterprises."

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