

# The Right FIT

A partnership for all Oregonians

**S**ierra Club and RS Energy have partnered to coordinate group-buying power with environmental ethics to create an affordable path for many Oregonians to install solar PV (6/23 news, "Sierra Club Spreads Solar Panels").

Yet there is, in fact, an even better way to make solar PV affordable for all Oregonians while growing an entire industry rather than a single business — using Feed-in Tariffs (FITs) for renewable energy. Gov. Kitzhaber's 2010 *Strategy for Oregon's Economic Prosperity* states that, "A well-designed FIT encourages community buy-in and support, builds the local economy with green jobs, and provides stable markets that encourage local investment."



Research and experience demonstrate that FITs are the most effective policy to rapidly deploy market-ready renewables. A FIT requires the utility to purchase all electricity fed into the grid from customer-generated renewables at a rate designed to cover all costs plus a return on investment over a 15- or 20-year contract period. FITs attract private capital and provide investment security to lenders since customer-generators have guaranteed revenue sufficient to ensure loan repayment. FIT rates are differentiated by technology type, size and location to encourage a diverse energy portfolio.

FITs are preferable to our current incentives, which are inefficient in using tax dollars to pay up front for a very limited amount of generation and compete with schools and other essential services for scarce public funds.

Ontario, Canada leads the way on FIT policy in North America with their Green Energy and Green Economy Act of 2009. In its first year the program accepted 22,000 installation applications initiating 5,000 MW of renewable energy (enough to replace more than 16 Boardman coal plants), created 43,000 jobs and attracted \$9 billion in private capital investment. The ratepayer impact was about the cost of a doughnut per month added to customer electric bills.

Germany's 12-year experience with FIT policy has established it as a global leader in renewable energy generation, building robust industries and creating thousands of local, family-wage jobs. As a result, Germany announced that it is completely shutting down its nuclear industry by 2022. Renewables currently supply almost 20 percent of their electricity at a cost equal to about a beer per month per household. The German solar industry alone employs more than 100,000 workers.

Oregon's Solar Pilot Program (open only to investor-owned utility customers) is a first, if flawed, attempt at a FIT policy. Still, the concept has been very popular, as all three capacity reservation enrollment windows have filled in under an hour.

**Locally, EWEB should be commended** for its Direct Generation program for solar PV. It's similar to a FIT yet is limited in scope by reliance on voluntary GreenPower contributions for support. EWEB staff recently indicated that they will include analysis of a FIT in the next stage of their Integrated Energy Resource Planning (IERP) process, as they prepare information on supply-side resources for the Citizen Advisory Panel for August.

My own 2006 research indicates that we could generate 68 megawatts of electricity annually (MWa) in Eugene from solar PV on large commercial and public buildings alone. As EWEB's IERP process points out, balancing peak demand for energy with the baseload power needed to keep the lights on is a complicated process, yet 68 MWa from solar PV is a significant resource for meeting that demand.

LCC's Northwest Energy Efficiency Institute continues to train the next generations of solar and energy efficiency professionals. Installing 68 MWa of solar in Eugene could create close to 900 installation jobs in the local economy. Eugene already has five solar installers, but there's a lot of opportunity for both new businesses and new jobs as energy dollars recirculate longer in the local economy.

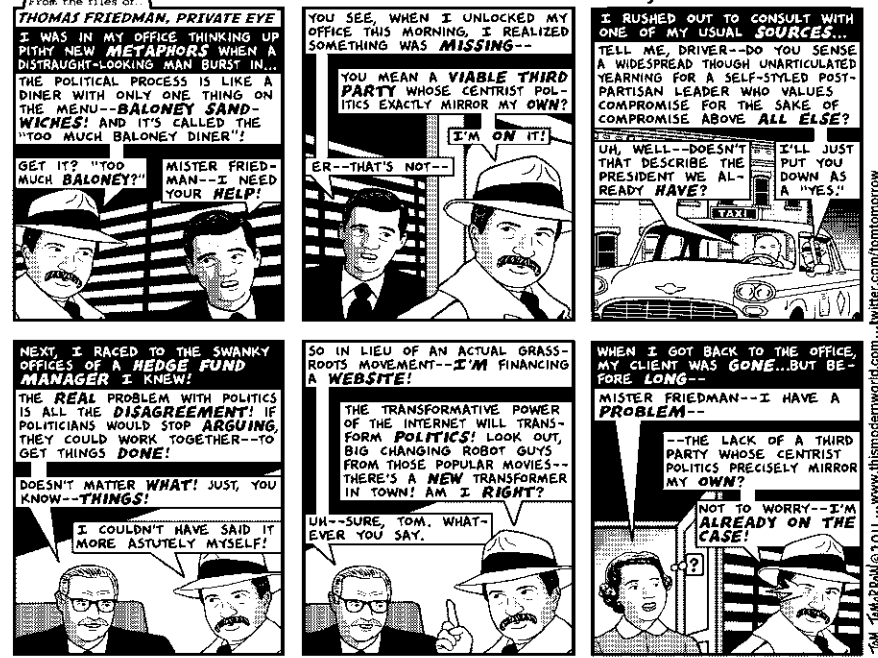
With a FIT, homeowners or small-business owners with little disposable income but good credit and a suitable rooftop can affordably install solar PV and receive a reasonable return on their investment. Farmers, agencies, schools, houses of worship and individuals with insufficient tax liability can all participate.

Acquiring a star player generates lots of excitement. Building a strong team creates champions. The right FIT democratizes the grid by providing opportunity for all Oregonians to participate in Oregon's clean energy economy.

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## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### OUTLANDISH ATTACK

Lane County sheriff union spokesman Les Sieczkowski recently used the county commissioners' settling the partisan "open meetings" lawsuit against three Democratic commissioners as a lame excuse for not making minor concessions. How phony.

If anyone should have paid for the political harassment lawsuit, it should begin with Seneca Jones Timber/Sawmill, in whose corporate office former commissioner Ellie Dumdi was introduced to Salem lawyer Nathan Reitman, already chosen by Seneca's top brass to be "her" attorney. Dumdi, who agreed to serve as a proxy plaintiff in this bizarre and totally unfair attack upon the county, hid from public knowledge the three-party legal fee agreement with Reitman wherein she was spared financial responsibility. So much for "openness"!

Coos Bay Judge Michael Gillespie's outlandish verdict was, by most expert legal and judicial sources, destined to be overturned. Gillespie, no stranger to being reversed by Oregon's Court of Appeals, blatantly legislated from the bench, distorting the intent of the open meetings law beyond recognition.

Commissioners Handy, Sorenson and Fleenor *never* met as a quorum to discuss the December 2009 funding of part-time aids. While the Judge declared Fleenor totally innocent of voting for the small supplemental appropriation, he unfairly ordered the county to pay thousands for his defense.

The current Republican board majority (Stewart, Leiken and Bozievich) could have successfully appealed Gillespie's verdict, saving some \$600,000 in unjust legal fees, vindicating the defendants.

They chose politics instead to reward generous campaign donor Seneca with taxpayers' dollars. That's the galling outrage.

Maryann Francis  
Eugene

a system that used violence against nonviolent protestors was. To do that freedom riders had to provoke violence — and to show it big time on every television channel and newspaper front page.

When civil rights activists protested in Albany, Ga., a bit earlier than Birmingham, the city establishment was smart enough to do nothing, to let them demonstrate and to change nothing. There was no good publicity. They knew Birmingham was going to be different because they knew the chief of police was an extreme racist with very little self-control.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s strategy in Birmingham, Selma and elsewhere was deliberate, though utterly peaceful, provocation. The north was on his side but passively. He had the northern press and television on his side, but King needed them to make vivid what it was really like because passive sympathy would never bring change — only strong outrage would. Jesus, Gandhi and King weren't "nice" guys. They knew what they were doing. Of course, for each of them, the point was to show how deeply wrong the violent side was. The option to provoke violence in a legal, nonviolent way surely does not exonerate the violent. On the contrary, it is necessary in order to convict them.

Environmentalists should think harder about how to show how deeply wrong and violent our way of life is to the natural environment. That may mean provoking violence in a legal, nonviolent but much more publicly visible way hitherto — for the purpose of restraining the violence of the state and corporations toward the natural environment.

Justice is the most important thing in our common life. If we must suffer violence for its sake, so be it.

Sam Porter  
Eugene

### UNEXPECTED

A UO political scientist expounding (accurately and articulately) on one of the many harmful effects of America's de facto open borders policy ("Summer Jobs: No Americans Wanted" 7/28)? Never would I have expected such a piece in *EW*! Gotta hand it to you guys. But the UO lefties are liable to run Mr. Lafer out on a rail!

Jerry Ritter  
Springfield

### INTELLIGENT PROVOCATION

Environmental activists are tree sitting and blockading access to several timber sales in the Elliott State Forest. Many just came from a protest in Montana against Big Oil at the governor's office, which made nationwide headlines (*EW* news, 7/28).

During the '60s civil rights movement, the strategy was to show how guilty