

UTILITY PROPOSAL FOR TRANSITION FROM COAL ELECTRICITY IS TOO SLOW

Washington Legislation Needs Firm Retirement Dates and Clean Energy Commitment

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OLYMPIA, Wash.--Washington's legislature must substantially improve a proposal to transition the state fully off coal-fired electricity and onto renewable energy and energy efficiency. That's the takeaway message from reactions to a new legislative proposal ([HB 2002/SB 5874](#)) to replace Puget Sound Energy's dirty coal-fired electricity from its Colstrip power plant in Montana, which produces as much carbon pollution as half of all passenger cars in Washington. PSE currently receives about 30 percent of its electricity supply from coal, mostly from Colstrip. Investor-owned utilities Avista and Pacific Power also use Colstrip power to supply their Washington state customers.

"PSE took a step today that can start a more serious conversation about retiring the Colstrip plant. We're missing essential elements—retirement dates and replacing the coal power with clean, renewable energy—that need to be included in any legislation up for approval," said Bill Arthur, the Sierra Club's Deputy Western Beyond Coal Campaign Director. "The risk to Washington customers is too high to delay: Colstrip is old and its operating costs are going up. It needs modern pollution controls, and its utility owners could face potential fines for the plant's air and water quality violations. Without action now, all of those costs could fall on Washington families and businesses whose electricity comes from PSE, Avista and Pacific Power."

A statewide network of community leaders, ratepayers, conservation groups and clean energy advocates have asked for a plan that calls for an early retirement date for Colstrip and replaces its coal electricity with clean, renewable energy to the greatest possible extent. They point to renewable energy, such as solar and wind, and energy efficiency, which have the potential to create an additional 4,000 family-wage jobs in careers including construction, administrative support and installation.

"We support a planned, orderly and timely transition from coal to clean energy that treats Colstrip's workers and community with fairness while retiring the polluting Montana coal plant and replacing it with clean, renewable energy," said Jessica Finn

Coven, Washington state director of Climate Solutions. “Colstrip’s impacts on global warming and community health require us to take action now, not delay another decade or two.”

“Coal is a dirty fuel that puts our region’s climate and public health at risk, while making Washington families vulnerable to rising electricity costs as the cost of coal power rises nationwide,” said Nancy Hirsh, executive director of the NW Energy Coalition. “Instead of using coal, Washington’s investor-owned utilities can redouble their commitment to environmental stewardship by expanding energy efficiency efforts and increasing their investments in clean energy technology that benefits our health and climate while maintaining affordable and reliable electric service for customers.”

“Renewable energy has created nearly 4,000 jobs and over \$145 million in revenue for Washington counties, that is already supporting infrastructure and essential services like education and public safety across the state. Washington has an opportunity to lead the nation and build on the success of existing renewable energy policies by taking the next steps to replace its coal use with clean, renewable resources,” said Rachel Shimshak, executive director of Renewable Northwest.

“PSE has a tremendous opportunity to give Washington residents what they want: clean energy solutions that provide economic opportunity for more families,” said Becky Kelley, president of Washington Environmental Council. “We’re eager to partner with PSE, Avista and Pacific Power to set a retirement schedule that accelerates our transition off coal power, ensures fair treatment for the Colstrip community, and creates good clean energy jobs.”

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