

On Wednesday, Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed a package of four clean energy bills. These bills move Oregon to the forefront of climate action. These laws ban new fossil fuel plants and set aggressive targets for the state's two major utilities, requiring emission cuts of 80% by 2030, 90% by 2035 and 100% by 2040. This is not only a major step forward for the state; it should also clear the path to closer collaboration among Washington State, Oregon, and California on climate issues.

In signing the bills, Governor Brown observed that, "as we have all been experiencing, climate change is no longer a distant threat. It is here. In Oregon, and across the West, we are feeling its impacts every day." The bill setting these aggressive targets passed the Oregon Senate on the day of the hottest recorded temperature in the state's history. This has been a tough summer for Oregon. Over a hundred Oregonians were killed during the late June heatwave. The Bootleg fire has burned over 400,000 acres and is less than half contained.

Here are a few details about the four bills:

[House Bill 2021](#) creates the emission reduction mandate. It's a complex piece of legislation, and I'll only mention some of the provisions. The cuts are measured from a 2010-2012 baseline. By 2022, the utilities must file Integrated Resource Plans, which will detail their strategies for making the cuts. Utilities must convene advisory groups containing representatives of environmental justice and low income communities. Costs are capped annually at a 6% rate increase. There are additional provisions relating to rooftop solar and to communities electing to become community choice aggregators. The law also contains provisions addressing wages and benefits for workers on renewable energy projects.

[House Bill 2165](#) addresses electrical charging for vehicles. It calls for an add-on charge to all retail customers in order to collect 0.25% of the utilities annual revenue, with the proceeds to be devoted to charging infrastructure. As far as I can figure out, that's about \$7.5 million per year. HB 2165 also sets up a special rebate program for low- and medium-income purchasers of electric vehicles.

[House Bill 2475](#) is aimed at controlling rate burdens on customers. It directs the Public Utility Commission to make special provision for rates to take into account the needs of "low-income customers and other economic, social equity or environmental justice factors." The bill obviously reflects concerns that rate increases from decarbonization may pose a disparate burden on less affluent communities.

[House Bill 3141](#) is the final piece of the package. It modifies an existing public service

charge intended to support energy efficiency and clean energy, and targets a quarter of the funds to low-income and moderate-income customers.

In her brief signing statement, Governor Brown said:

“If other states follow Oregon’s lead, 2021 can be a year of climate action for this country. Unfortunately, under the prior administration, we lost four precious years.

“There is no time to lose.”

Amen to that.