

Common Sense

In this discussion as in life, it is helpful to step back and analyze a problem with a larger perspective than we are normally in habit of doing. If you spend too much time trying to conform to specific organizational rules or bureaucratic formulas it is easy to lose sight of the greater end goal. It is with this frame work that I will lay out why it is in our utility customers and our State's best interest to continue funding residential energy efficiency programs at current levels, or to increase these funding levels.

We have the civil responsibility to do so. Poll after poll shows that the citizens of Oregon want to support and implement energy efficiency. Our Governor and our President have called this out as a key initiative. Our leaders and our citizens are calling on our industry to accomplish their efficiency goals.

If we look at what we need to do, we see the following. There are hundreds of thousands of Oregonian's living in homes that are 50 to 100 years old. These homes do not meet today's energy code, they have unhealthy indoor air and don't satisfy the current resident's comfort needs. Last year the industry retrofitted a few thousand homes. If we are trying to accomplish even larger retrofit goals our leaders have put forth, and that our citizen have gotten behind, we cannot slow down our efforts. We must be accelerating our efforts and expanding our industry, not prematurely putting on the breaks.

When a natural resource is cheap you should still be conserving, not wasting it. It is "un-American" to waste resources. Benjamin Franklin and Henry Ford built their careers on using resources efficiently. Natural gas is cheap today, however that is no reason to change our plans for an energy efficient economy. As we start to export liquefied natural gas to countries that are currently paying 3 to 7 times our current rates, we do not know with any certainty what will happen to our domestic rates.

You do not accomplish goals by working intermittently. As we all know from our personal fitness goals or from raising children you will not accomplish much without consistency. It will take a robust industry to accomplish our statewide energy efficiency goals. You cannot have a robust industry if you are continually turning industry stimulus (incentives) on and off during the early foundational period. A decade from now the industry will be on stronger footing with a more educated consumer base. As the industry matures, so will the organizations who are focused solely on it and incentives will be less critical, however we are not yet at this point. If the PUC moves forward with severely reducing incentives this will completely halt our burgeoning industry.

I am lucky enough each year to participate our industry's national conferences, where I meet people from similar business owners and professionals throughout the country. More often than not I get into a conversation with an Industry participant and they tell me how lucky I am to live in a state like Oregon where there is so much forward thinking and planning for the future. Where we are doing our best to usher in the technology and industries of the 21st century. Where organizations like the Energy Trust of Oregon and Clean Energy Works are working every day to make the aspirations of our citizens come to fruition. If we slash these programs incentives, it will be severely impact Oregon homeowners. Additionally, it will be terribly confusing and disheartening for the public who expects these programs to be working on these larger issues. If Energy Trust and Clean Energy Works are not here to help

implement and provide the public direct access to clean energy incentives, than who will pick up this torch?

In conclusion, it takes courage. I recognize that these arguments might not get a lot of traction if you are only looking at this problem through the lenses of “Total Resource Cost Test” but that is a second-rate excuse to make a bad decision. I have talked about this general subject at many networking events over the last year and not once did someone think that it was a good idea to curtail residential energy efficiency because natural gas is cheap, period. Regardless of what a formula says. This decision process resembles the process that school boards used in the 1950’s to perpetuate segregation.

Do you want to use a bureaucratic framework as a cover to make a bad decision? Thirty years from now will you be able to look back and feel proud of the courage you had to make the right decision for the your grandchildren, or will you be the one trying to explain why you were constrained and didn’t have the political backing to do the right thing?

/s/

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