



GREEN ENERGY INSTITUTE

AT LEWIS & CLARK LAW SCHOOL

June 2018

Thanks for joining us for Swamp Ethics

Thanks to those of you who joined us for Swamp Ethics at Vestas corporate offices on May 30. Melissa Powers, GEI Director, teed off the event by detailing some of the recent actions by federal officials that have caused ethical concerns in the wider community, including sweetheart rental deals with lobbyists and extravagant taxpayer-funded travel expenses. We appreciate the engaging conversation that followed between ethics professionals Steve Johansen, Professor of Law at Lewis & Clark Law School, and Theodore Reuter, Assistant Disciplinary Counsel at the Oregon State Bar, as we examined the ethical boundaries for hypothetical licensed lawyers acting as government officials in Oregon. Thanks to those in the audience that also contributed great questions into the mix! In case you missed it, we hope to have the event available for streaming online soon. For those who attended and/or are interested, [please find reading material from the event here.](#)



Updates from SB 978, Utility Reform Process



GEI Staff Attorney Amelia Schlusser was one of three presenters for the low-carbon future group before the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) at its May SB 978 meeting, a process aimed at exploring how Oregon's utility laws and regulatory framework should change to meet current and future needs. Representing a diverse set of interests, including Oregon's electric and natural gas utilities, local governments, environmental organizations, renewable energy developers, policy analysts, and energy consumers, the low-carbon future group reached agreement that Oregon's utility regulatory framework needs to adapt to meet the three goals of energy decarbonization: maximize energy conservation and efficiency, transition from fossil fuels to zero-carbon energy sources, and decarbonize the transportation sector and other carbon-intensive end uses. The group identified a series of policy mechanisms that Oregon could implement to advance its decarbonization efforts. All members agreed that the Oregon legislature needs to adopt an economy-wide mandate to cap and reduce carbon emissions and achieve the state's 2050 greenhouse gas reduction goals. "The amount of agreement within the group was a very positive sign that Oregon has the will to decarbonize the energy system," Amy notes. "While there are some varying opinions among group members regarding specific strategies for achieving Oregon's decarbonization goals, the fact that a group of people with diverse experiences and views were quickly able to agree on a common goal suggests that Oregon's energy sector is poised to transition to a low-carbon future. Stakeholders, regulators, and policymakers should continue to work together to develop effective strategies moving forward."

To learn more about the low-carbon future group's findings and recommendations, [read the group's May 31 memo to the PUC Commissioners.](#) Memos from each of the four SB 978 workgroups (economic efficiency, customer choice, access, and low-carbon future) are available [on the PUC's website](#). Stay tuned for more SB 978 updates.

Notes from the Joint Interim Committee on Carbon Reduction Meeting

In an effort to pass a carbon pricing policy for Oregon in 2019, state lawmakers formed the Joint Interim Committee on Carbon Reduction and the Carbon Policy office during the 2018 legislative session. The Committee [met for the first time on May 22nd](#) (video footage available) to hear from Phil Mote, Director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, on Oregon's climate change facts and Richard Whitman, Director of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality, on the state's efforts thus far to curb greenhouse gas emissions. These presentations were followed by Dallas Burtraw, Senior Fellow at Resources for the Future, who provided recommendations regarding effective policy design. Notable takeaways from Burtraw include:



- DEQ should auction credits instead of providing free allowances, which can lead to windfall profits when costs are shifted to consumers instead of regulated entities;
- Oregon's program should implement a price floor, as the biggest threat to cap-and-trade programs is often not high prices, but rather extremely low prices at auction; and
- Oregon has the opportunity to set an example with effective policy making, but this will require Oregon to revise past legislative cap-and-trade proposals.

The committee's next meeting will be held on June 26th, [including updates from the newly formed Carbon Policy Office.](#)

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