

Washington Environmental Council ● Sierra Club
NW Energy Coalition ● Renewable Northwest Project

TO ALL MEDIA

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**Senate passes bill weakening
state renewable energy standards**

SB 5840 undermines Washington's clean-energy leadership

OLYMPIA – Businesses, consumers, community leaders and other renewable energy advocates have joined with the entire state environmental community in expressing disappointment in the Washington State Senate's Tuesday-night passage of a bill that would severely cut renewable energy standards set by public vote in 2006.

If approved by the House and signed into law, ESSB 5840, would dramatically slash new renewable-energy investments in this state – investments spurred by passage of the Clean Energy Act, Initiative 937. Those investments are already providing much-needed jobs, farm income and local tax revenue throughout Washington, and the potential of millions of dollars more is crucial to our economic recovery.

"We're in danger of making Washington the first state in the country to go backward on clean energy," said Joan Crooks, executive director of Washington Environmental Council. "Our community is united in support of continued state leadership in building a clean-energy future. We cannot sit by as that future is eroded."

I-937 requires the state's largest electric utilities to gradually increase the amount of new renewable energy in their total supply to 15 percent by 2020. It also required those electric utilities to pursue all the energy conservation opportunities that would save money for their customers.

Many renewable energy companies have responded strongly to Washington's renewables standard, developing several wind projects in previously distressed rural counties across the state. These projects are providing near- and long-term jobs, payments to landowners, and large new contributions to local and state tax bases. These projects have revitalized rural areas and made substantial contributions to a green energy future.

Many of the special interests that opposed the Clean Energy Act before and during the initiative campaign are trying the same old scare messages, such as claiming that renewable energy development will increase consumers' costs.

"The truth," said Sara Patton, executive director of the NW Energy Coalition, a clean-energy and consumer advocacy organization, "is that more renewable energy will not only reduce consumer costs but also bolster jobs and community investment. New renewable energy protects consumers – especially low-income families – from price spikes in fossil fuels and hydropower shortages."

ESSB 5840 undermines I-937's renewables standards in several ways:

- **ESSB 5840 imposes a load-growth limit, capping the renewable energy requirement to the *lesser* of load growth or the voter-approved standards.** That change alone could severely cut new renewables development, depriving the state of much-needed economic-development opportunities.
- **ESSB 5840 grandfathers in some existing *hydropower and biomass resources*, which avoids or delays development of *new, clean resources* and the economic benefits they bring to Washington's communities -- *new jobs, reduced emissions, and a diversified energy supply, to name a few.*** Backdating allowance of some hydropower counts dams built in the late 1800s.
- **ESSB 5840 forces unnecessary trade-offs between conservation and renewables.** Conservation is the cheapest way to meet growing energy needs. *New* renewable energy affordably meets our electricity needs and protects us from continued reliance on fossil fuels. We need both.

Crooks stressed the crucial role House members must play in stopping this unwarranted rewrite of the Clean Energy Act. "Supporters of clean energy, the environment and good jobs must stand up now," she said. "I'm confident that they will."

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