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## SPOTLIGHT

# MARSH HELPS DELIVER “DISTINCTLY OREGONIAN” CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

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Part 2 of a series. [Click here to read Part 1.](#)

### **OREGON HAS A NEW CLIMATE HERO, AND SHE LIVES RIGHT HERE IN ASHLAND.**

As Chair of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment, District 5 Representative Pam Marsh was well-positioned this year to help ensure passage of legislation ranging from fire recovery and economic stimulus to “distinctly Oregonian” climate solutions.

In our July 2 Spotlight, we detailed the 100% Clean Energy Bill--a major climate victory by all accounts. The bill makes Oregon the eighth state in the nation to commit to 100% clean or renewable electricity, joining California, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico, New York, Virginia, and Washington.

100% Clean Energy is epic. But Rep. Marsh is just as excited about five other 2021 legislative victories aimed at reducing Oregon’s climate and environmental impacts--while also addressing energy affordability for low-income residents. These are all important “win-win” opportunities!

First, there’s the bipartisan approach to **energy affordability** ([HB2475](#)) which

got the green light in March. It encourages utilities to provide rate discounts, weatherization, and other programs for low-income and other underserved customers. The bill also provides funds to help people burdened by energy costs to participate in regulatory processes.

Then, in early May, an **electric vehicle bill** crossed the finish line. [HB2290](#) “allows utilities to develop EV infrastructure and expands the subsidies available to low-income folks to buy EVs,” Marsh explains.

Another early-May victory was the reauthorization of the **public purpose charge** ([HB3141](#)). “It’s not sexy, but it was definitely an energy priority,” she notes.

Customers of investor-owned utilities like Pacific Power and Portland General Electric have paid a public purpose surcharge since 1999. The funds are used by the nonprofit [Energy Trust of Oregon](#), to provide energy efficiency incentives and other energy conservation programs and investments.

The bill renews the surcharge until 2036, reducing it from 3% to 1.5%, since energy efficiency programs are also provided directly by the utilities and included in base rates.

“The continuation of Energy Trust is huge,” says Marsh. “Energy efficiency is our cheapest way out of this mess, and they are positioned to do innovative work.”

She cites [Energy Trust’s manufactured home replacement program](#) as a great example. “It makes more sense to help people buy new ones than to continually upgrade these older homes that are leaking energy.” Energy Trust provides money to upgrade to a newer home.

The program has special relevance here in Southern Oregon, where many residents lost their manufactured homes to the Almeda fire. “If they live in the Pacific Power territory, they should be eligible for these incentives,” says Marsh.

Last but not least, Marsh helped to carry two more climate solutions to victory on the final day of the 2021 session.

**The Healthy Homes Bill** ([HB2842](#)) establishes a Healthy Homes Program at the Oregon Health Authority to address housing issues that lead to poor health outcomes for low-income residents. Funding could be used to address lead or radon issues, improve indoor air quality, fix leaky roofs or poor sewer systems, or for energy efficiency upgrades, according to Marsh. Accommodations for seniors and disabled residents are also included.

Marsh cites Habitat for Humanity as a prime candidate to apply for the program, as well as coordinated care organizations and other organizations serving seniors and disabled individuals.

The city of Ashland could also seek state funding for air purifiers for low-income households, as it has secured in the past. “We clearly need to do more of that work,” Marsh asserts.

“Look at this 110 degree weather,” she adds. “Having a house where you can be cool and breathe is essential.”

Last but not least: **modernized recycling!** [SB582](#) sets a common baseline for recycling services statewide while also borrowing pages from the playbook of Oregon’s groundbreaking 1971 “bottle bill.” Under that program--the first bottle bill in the U.S.--producers figured out how to run the recycling system, and then run it.

“We’ll involve producers of items that normally go to the landfill to help us figure out how to recycle them,” Marsh explains. “If you involve the producer and figure out what happens to the packaging, there is a very strong incentive for sleeker

and less invasive packaging, and we can reduce the amount of wasteful packaging coming into our homes.”

Marsh notes that reducing packaging is also a climate and energy issue. “A lot of fossil fuels are going into the production of a lot of that packaging.”

When it comes to finding climate solutions, Rep. Marsh feels a sense of urgency. “If we fail, then we’ll just be here year after year after, paying for separate disasters.”

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