

Oregon is at a clean-tech crossroads

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Over the past several years, Oregon has taken a leadership position in renewable energy, energy efficiency and clean-technology development. Largely due to progressive energy policy and strategic incentives, Oregon has become a national focal point for solar energy manufacturing, wind energy production, and most recently, electric vehicle technology and infrastructure.

Oregon's leadership position was recognized by a recent Pew study finding Oregon led the nation in the creation of new clean-tech jobs. With international heavyweights such as Vestas (wind turbines), Iberdrola Renewables (renewable energy developer), and SolarWorld (solar equipment manufacturer) calling Oregon their North American home, and newcomers such as ZeaChem (cellulosic biofuel) and ReVolt (next generation battery technology) developing new technologies here, there is much to be excited about. We are poised to become the national leader in other clean technologies as well, including energy



efficiency and biomass, ocean wave and geothermal energy generation.

We must recognize, though, that the lingering economic downturn and budget woes put Oregon at a crossroads. We can continue to build our leadership position in clean technology and grow long-term, living wage jobs in these industries, or we can signal to the marketplace that Oregon is no longer interested in fostering clean technology job growth.

The Legislature will consider steps to roll back the business energy tax credit program in the special session this month. While there are program modifications that can save the state money, we should be careful not to significantly tarnish Oregon's leadership reputation. Equally important, if we change the rules of the game for projects already in the pipeline, Oregon could quickly develop a reputation as a state that cannot be trusted for business development.

My new year's wish for 2010 is that Oregon



comes through this year with as strong a reputation in growing clean technology as it began the year, and that in doing so Oregon's economy begins to grow again.

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