

Coal Free Future for Washington

Moving beyond the dirty fuels economy of the past to the clean energy economy of the future.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislature passes landmark legislation to transition Washington off polluting coal-fired power

*Bill endorsed by environmental community, TransAlta, labor unions
and Gov. Gregoire heads to governor for signature*

OLYMPIA – Today, the Washington State Legislature put its final stamp of approval on a plan to responsibly transition TransAlta Corp.'s Centralia, Wash., power plant off of coal. The state Senate approved technical changes made in the House and sent the Coal-Free Future for Washington bill to Gov. Chris Gregoire for her much-anticipated signature.

This landmark legislation reflects an historic agreement between Washington environmental leaders, TransAlta, unions and the governor. One of the four environmental community priorities for the 2011 legislative session, ESSB 5769 passed the Senate on a bi-partisan vote of 33 to 14 (to read the bill, go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5769&year=2011>).

“This is a win-win-win for our health, the environment, our economy and the Lewis County community,” said Coal-Free Future for Washington campaign director Doug Howell. “This legislation – the result of environmentalists, labor unions, health experts, faith leaders, the local community, the corporation, the governor and legislators all working together – will drastically reduce the harm to human health and our environment from coal pollution.”

“Washington has created a model for the nation of how investing in the transition to a clean-energy future can create jobs and a healthy economy,” said Andrew Rose, volunteer chair of the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal campaign in Washington.

“The positive Senate vote brings us one step closer to a coal-free future for Washington, in which all God’s children have clean air and water and the opportunity to earn a living wage,” said Earth Ministry executive director LeeAnne Beres. “This bill will transition our state off of coal while providing much-needed investment in energy efficiency and economic development in Lewis County, and is a win for our environment, our economy, and our communities.”

The bill requires TransAlta to phase out its 1,460-megawatt coal plant in stages between 2020 and 2025. The timeline allows for an orderly transition for plant workers and the local

community, and provides a greater opportunity to replace the power from one of the country's largest coal-fired power plants (and largest, period, in the Pacific Northwest) with energy efficiency and clean resources such as wind and solar.

Specifically, the bill calls for TransAlta to:

- End half of its coal-burning in 2020 and the rest by 2025.
- Significantly reduce haze pollution by Jan. 1, 2013.
- Provide \$30 million in direct economic development and energy efficiency jobs to the community and another \$25 million to develop clean energy technology in the state.

Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility executive director Cherie Eichholz applauded the bill's passage. "Given the clear and growing threats to public health posed by coal-fired plants," she said, "the public health community commends Washington state legislators and the stakeholders involved for taking action that will move us toward a coal-free Northwest."

Jessica Finn Coven of Climate Solutions said the bill shows how to transition off fossil fuels while building a stronger economic future for local communities. "The Centralia transition is a powerful model of what works: business, labor, conservation groups and communities working together to end our dependence on fossil fuels and create a brighter clean energy future," she said.

"Passage of this bill marks a milestone on the path to a coal-free future for Washington and a significant step toward a clean energy economy for our state," said Kristina Dumas of Environment Washington. "Now is the time to further explore and embrace cleaner, greener sources of energy like the sun and wind."

NW Energy Coalition policy director Nancy Hirsh said the 2020 and 2025 transition dates provide ample time to seek cleaner energy sources than natural gas to replace TransAlta's power. "We have an abundance of untapped energy efficiency and renewable energy resources available to us," Hirsh said. "Saving energy and producing clean renewable energy will create far more jobs than simply switching to another fossil fuel."

The non-profit environmental law firm Earthjustice represented the Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association and the Northwest Environmental Defense Center in several regulatory and legal actions that helped bring TransAlta to the negotiating table. "We are pleased that an arrangement has been reached that ultimately replaces this outdated old power with new investment in the families of Lewis county and cleaner energy for our state," said Earthjustice attorney Janette Brimmer.

"Every year, millions of visitors to Mount Rainier and Olympic national parks are unable to see the postcard views they expect because they have been obscured by haze pollution largely caused by the TransAlta power plant," said National Parks Conservation Association Clean Air Counsel Stephanie Kodish. "This legislation represents a big step forward in restoring the sights and health of these iconic parks to their natural splendor."

Washington Environmental Council executive director Joan Crooks called the bill's passage "a victory for all of Washington – one the Environmental Priorities Coalition worked hard to achieve. We will continue working to ensure that the agreement is implemented in the right way, the way that safeguards the economic and environmental future of our state."

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The Environmental Priorities Coalition is a network of 24 leading environmental groups in Washington state who believe we can have a strong economy that provides everyone with the opportunity to prosper and a clean, healthy and safe environment for ourselves and our children.

Formed in 2003, the Environmental Priorities Coalition selects priority issues each legislative session that are important to protecting public health and welfare.