

## 1. Oregon News

# Oregon Democrats advance ‘more aggressive’ potential paths to regulate carbon emissions than cap-and-trade bill

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Public employee union leaders, climate activists and others joined Democrats from the Oregon Legislature on the Capitol steps Tuesday, demanding that missing Republicans return to work. Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian

By [Hillary Borrud | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

SALEM — Democrats in the Oregon Legislature signaled this week that they are unwilling to give up on passing bills to address climate change, despite ongoing [boycotts](#) by Republicans in both the House and Senate that have prevented remaining lawmakers from holding votes.

In a low-key and extremely brief House Rules Committee meeting Tuesday, they [advanced](#) three new pieces of legislation that largely mirror initiatives that environmentalists are working to get on the November ballot. No Republicans attended the committee meeting; most GOP members fled the Capitol earlier this week to prevent votes on a controversial Democrat-backed greenhouse gas cap-and-trade bill.

Taking the climate issue to voters was environmentalists’ backup plan, one that would be expensive and likely — based on Washington voters’ [defeat](#) of a carbon fee in 2018 — challenging to win.

“Of course, cap and invest remains our only legislative priority,” said Brad Reed, a spokesman for the pro-cap-and-trade group Renew Oregon. “We filed the ballot measures back in the fall for the very reason that we knew the legislative process couldn’t be depended upon to function as it’s supposed to and we wanted to give Oregonians assurance climate action would happen one way or another.”

Reed said the new bills “do mirror our ballot initiatives pretty closely,” but he did not predict they would achieve much in the current legislative stalemate beyond reminding Oregonians about the ballot initiatives.

In a statement issued through her spokesman Tuesday, House Speaker Tina Kotek said the bills “were drafted to make it clear that there are other more aggressive options that could be taken.” Kotek said she remains committed to passing the cap-and-trade bill.

[House Bill 4173](#) and [House Bill 4171](#) would set new greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, either directly or by instructing the state’s Environmental Quality Commission to do so. The measures would empower the commission to set regulations to achieve those goals. That’s similar to Initiative Petition 50.

[House Bill 4170](#) would mandate 100% renewable and carbon free electricity in Oregon by 2045, similar to Initiative Petitions 48 and 49.

[House Joint Resolution 204](#) would amend the state Constitution to allow the Legislature to designate up to half of proceeds from a fuel tax to be spent as lawmakers choose, not necessarily put into the State Highway Fund, as current law directs. That would address a criticism by opponents, that much of the money raised by cap-and-trade would have to go into the state highway fund.

Three of the four bills, with the exception of House Bill 4173, include a provision that would place them on the November ballot and only allow them to take effect if approved by voters. It’s not clear if environmental groups will have the time and money they would need to pass the similar initiatives. A political action committee associated with the initiatives does not hold the millions of dollars that successful ballot campaigns typically require in Oregon, and recent financial data on the 501(c)(4) Renew Oregon Action Fund is not available since its most recent [tax return](#) filed with the Oregon Department of Justice is for 2018.

Last year, Initiative Petitions 48 and 49 were [held up](#) when Secretary of State Bev Clarno determined they violated a provision in the state Constitution that says initiatives can only address a single subject. However, Reed said backers of the initiatives won a legal challenge to Clarno’s decision and all the initiatives are now proceeding through more routine ballot title challenges. Supporters have until July 2 to gather more than 112,000 valid signatures to get each of the initiatives on the November ballot.

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