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I support Washington's clean energy goals, but I believe the permitting process must prioritize transparency, independent science, and meaningful community involvement.

State agencies reviewing clean energy projects should have the expertise and resources necessary to independently evaluate applications rather than relying primarily on information provided by developers. Review teams should include specialists in areas such as hydrology, wildfire risk, emergency response, geology, electrical infrastructure, and air quality so that potential impacts can be thoroughly assessed.

Washington should also improve public access to information about proposed energy projects. Community members should be able to easily find permit applications, project status updates, agency correspondence, environmental reviews, and opportunities for public participation through a single, user-friendly portal. Transparent and consistent information is essential for building public trust.

For battery energy storage systems and other emerging energy technologies, the state should conduct comprehensive, independent environmental and safety studies that evaluate risks under a variety of site-specific conditions, including local topography, groundwater, weather patterns, and evacuation constraints. These studies should be publicly available and should help establish minimum statewide safety standards while allowing local governments to adopt stronger protections when warranted.

Communities, local governments, and tribal governments should have a meaningful role early in the planning process, before project locations are finalized. Projects are more likely to succeed when residents are informed, engaged, and able to participate in decisions that may affect public safety, natural resources, and quality of life.

I also encourage the state to publish independent information about clean energy technologies, including safety data, environmental monitoring results, and lessons learned from existing facilities. Providing objective information from trusted sources can help address public concerns and improve confidence in clean energy development.

Finally, environmental protection must remain a priority. Site selection should avoid sensitive habitats and consider local environmental conditions from the outset. State agencies should work collaboratively with communities, tribal governments, and independent experts to identify locations that minimize environmental impacts while supporting Washington's clean energy objectives.