

Diana Winther

Good evening. For the record, my name is Diana Winther, and I'm a resident of Longview, Washington. I recognize that I'm a little bit far from home, but the Goldendale Energy Storage Project is important enough for me to travel to here to show my support in person. I'm a proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48. I'm also president of the Cowlitzs-Wahkiakum Central Labor Council. You're going to hear a lot of the same information about the importance of jobs and family-wage jobs, and having healthcare and having the opportunity to retire with dignity throughout this hearing, likely. And I think it might seem repetitive, but I also think it's really important. Although, the draft Environmental Impact Statement does not speak to the positive social impacts, I think it's essential to note that this energy storage facility will be built by over 3,000 skilled union workers from the area. The jobs created by building this project will allow those tradespeople to support their families, and their local spending will support the families of business owners in the area. The \$14 million in annual tax revenue generated can be used for improvements to roads and schools and provide funding for local essential services. This project will also allow building trades unions the opportunity to start more apprentices, giving those folks a chance to start rewarding careers that come with the quality wages and benefits needed in today's economy. I understand that moving forward with this project will impact environmental and tribal resources, and that is not something to ignore. The draft EIS states that the environmental impacts can be reduced through mitigation, but the tribal impacts are more challenging to address. I'm hopeful that the parties can work together to find an equitable compromise, because the alternative is a loss for us all. And I'm just referring to the members I represent who would miss out on years of employment if this project isn't permitted. Although, I think that is important. I live in an area that is significantly economically depressed, and a project like this would literally change people's lives. But jobs are only a small piece of why I support construction of this facility. Washington's committed to a renewable energy future. We cannot add more renewable energy sources to the grid without ways to store that energy. Lithium-ion batteries are not going to be able to provide all the storage we need. And, frankly, mining lithium comes with its own environmental concerns. If we truly intend to combat climate change, we need this project and more projects like it. If we don't start moving forward with actual ways to make our goals into reality, we are going to fail. And that failure doesn't mean we blow an arbitrary deadline that's in the law, it means we are not doing what we need to do to address the impacts of climate change. The land throughout our state, whether sacred or not, will be impacted negatively by our inaction. So I support this project continuing to move forward. To prevent its construction means that we are maintaining the unacceptable status quo we have now, and no one, not union workers, not tribal members, not small business owners, not members of this community, not Washingtonians throughout the state, will be served by that failure. Thank you.