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Oregon Business, Labor Urge Haste on Energy Projects

A coalition of business and labor groups urged Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski last Thursday to move ahead rapidly with energy infrastructure projects. Energy Action Northwest swept through the capital the following day, with its members engaging lawmakers, and it reinforced its pitch by scheduling a full-page advertisement in Sunday's (March 8) *Portland Oregonian*.

Having found some success in helping the region secure expanded borrowing authority (up to \$3.5 billion) for the Bonneville Power Administration to use in building new electric transmission out of the Obama administration stimulus package, the coalition now said it is focusing on gas infrastructure in the state and region.

A worsening state economy, with accompanying high unemployment, has prompted the business-labor group to seek a quick permitting process to allow for construction of the Bradwood Landing liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal along the Columbia River in Oregon and Palomar Pipeline to connect the terminal to the Northwest interstate gas pipeline system in Washington state.

Meanwhile, Kulongoski and state energy officials have challenged the heavily conditioned federal decision approving NorthernStar Natural Gas Corp.'s Bradwood Landing project.

Oregon filed in late January with a federal appeals court to reverse the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) conditioned approval of the Bradwood project after FERC refused the state's request that the feds reconsider their approval, which is based on Bradwood Landing obtaining all local and state permits. Kulongoski has maintained he is not unalterably opposed to an LNG facility in his state, and the filing to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals does not constitute an objection to a facility in the state, according to Oregon Attorney General John Kroger and other state officials.

"Our energy infrastructure is inadequate to the task of meeting near-term demand," said Edward Finklea executive director of Energy Action Network. "Too many participants in the energy debate seem to have leaped to an incorrect and dangerous conclusion that we can afford to block, delay and otherwise interdict the development of this needed infrastructure as we wait for the promise of clean and green energy to become a reality. To do so will put the economic health of our state at risk."

Finklea indicated that his coalition will continue to cite the positive economic impact of the pending infrastructure projects, including Bradwood Landing and the Palomar pipeline, which together he stressed "would create close to 1,000 jobs and inject over \$1.5 billion into the state's economy."

Supporting the lobbying push with Finklea Thursday were state labor union leaders and state Rep. Mike Schaufler.

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