



Protect Our Winters POWers up the Outdoor State

On Earth Day, Welch and Kuster Introduce Bicameral Legislation to Invest in Local Communities, Strengthen Transmission Grid

BOULDER, CO (April 23, 2024) – Climate advocacy organization [Protect Our Winters](#) (POW) is thrilled to announce the introduction of the [Energizing Our Communities Act](#), a bill sponsored by Rep. Annie Kuster (D-NH) and Sen. Peter Welch (D-VT). The bill was introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate on April 18, and [publicly announced on Earth Day](#). Over the last 18 months, POW has worked tirelessly with partners to develop this common ground, common sense legislation.

All landscapes are experiencing the impacts of climate change through more significant weather events and disruptions, longer and hotter heat waves, more severe storms, worsening flood and drought cycles, shorter winters, and reduced snowpack. In addition to impacting our daily lives, these events cause severe damage to outdoor recreation and the \$862 billion outdoor recreation industry—from limiting outdoor activities to disrupting supply channels and access. POW advocated for the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, the most impactful US climate legislation ever. The IRA invests \$369 billion in clean energy and energy incentives, and will transform the way we source, distribute, and consume energy in America. To unlock the full potential of the IRA, we need rapid transmission development, and the EOCA will help overcome community opposition by reinvesting federal funds back into hosting communities, including tribal governments. The EOCA will provide a direct benefit to local, mostly rural, communities that approve clean energy projects. These benefits include funding to support transportation, broadband infrastructure, public health services, workforce development, and outdoor recreation.

“At Protect Our Winters (POW), we experience the urgency of the climate crisis directly in our snow, water, trails, and time outside. The path forward is in the transformative power of renewable energy, so we partnered with legislators to introduce our first federal legislation (EOCA) to support grid and community development in the energy transition. This legislation is a testament to the power of how a team of passionate athletes, creatives, scientists, brands, and policymakers can come together to build a better future.” - **Erin Sprague - CEO, Protect Our Winters**

On Earth Day, **U.S. Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt.), member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy, and U.S. Representative Annie Kuster (D-N.H.-02)** unveiled the *Energizing Our Communities Act*, legislation to support local communities that host Department of Energy (DOE)- backed transmission projects. The program will help build trust between

local governments and transmission developers so our nation can sustainably increase transmission capacity, which is crucial to a national clean energy transition.

“Expanding transmission lines is key to achieving a clean energy future and ensuring long-term welfare of communities in Vermont, New England, and across the country. But building a comprehensive and reliable transmission grid that connects communities to renewable energy won’t happen overnight. That’s why it’s crucial to support community buy-in programs that work to increase transmission build-out at the ground level,” **said Sen. Welch, member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy.** “The *Energizing Our Communities Act* works to strengthen the nation’s transmission grid by fostering a healthy relationship between communities and developers. This will be critical to boosting clean power capacity nationwide so we can lower energy costs, increase resiliency from extreme weather events, and help meet rising clean energy demands.”

“If we are going to transition to a clean energy future, it’s critical we expand our energy grid’s transmission capacity,” **said Rep. Kuster.** “These projects will be a win-win for all by increasing the capacity of clean energy transmission and investing in local communities. This legislation will provide support for economic development, infrastructure and recreation improvements, and conservation and stewardship while promoting a clean energy future.”

The *Energizing Our Communities Act* invests revenue from certain federal Department of Energy loan programs back into communities, including tribal governments, who host transmission infrastructure. This bill aims to support national transmission grid build-out by ensuring communities see the benefits of transmission at the ground level.

The *Energizing Our Communities Act* is endorsed by Protect Our Winters (POW); REI, VELCO: Vermont Electric Power Company; Grid Action; Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT); National League of Cities (NCL); National Association of Counties (NACO); Pathway Power; and Burton.

“Advocating for policies that allow communities access to clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet is our responsibility. Communities coast to coast in all seasons are seeing undeniable impacts of climate change. The science is clear, and the moment is now - we need to rapidly scale our ability to get more clean energy onto the grid, and I’m proud to support the *Energizing Our Communities Act*. This legislation provides real incentives and benefits to communities that host mission-critical transmission infrastructure and hopefully will inspire more YIMBYism (Yes In My Back Yard). This common ground and common sense legislation is about providing community benefits and securing the future of outdoor recreation and the communities that rely on it. It’s time for Congress to take bold action and lead the way for a sustainable future,” **said Jeremy Jones, Professional Snowboarder and Founder of Protect Our Winters.**

“At REI, we believe climate change poses an existential threat to our co-op, society, and planet and we aim to halve our emissions over the course of this decade on the pathway to net zero emissions. That’s why we support the *Energizing Our Communities*

Act as a commonsense bill to expand clean energy while investing in outdoor recreation infrastructure, conservation, stewardship, and natural climate solutions in those communities that are helping to transition the U.S. to a clean energy economy,” said **Taldi Harrison, Community & Government Affairs Director, REI Co-op.**

“At Burton, we fully acknowledge the urgent need for climate action and the pivotal role clean energy plays in building toward a healthy planet where all people can thrive. We endorse the *Energizing Our Communities Act* because it not only builds toward a zero carbon energy grid, it also invests and empowers the communities impacted by clean energy development. This dual investment – in infrastructure and community – is vital for building toward the future we all want to see. At Burton, we’ve long been committed to doing our part for the planet – from removing carbon-intensive materials from our products to reducing our environmental footprint through clean energy investments. But we know we alone can’t tackle the scale of the crisis in front of us. We’re proud to support common sense solutions like the EOCA which will help build the infrastructure we all need to move toward a clean energy future,” said **Ashley Laporte, Burton VP of Purpose & Impact.**

Learn more about the bill and its [impacts to the Outdoor State here](#). [Take action](#) and contact your representatives in support of EOCA. Want more? EOCA blog deep dive [here](#).

[Learn more](#) about the bill from Senator Welch. Read the [full text](#) of the bill.

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About Protect Our Winters (POW):

Protect Our Winters is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that helps passionate outdoor people protect the places and experiences they love from climate change. Founded in 2007 by professional snowboarder Jeremy Jones, POW is a community of athletes, scientists, creatives, and business leaders advancing non-partisan policies that protect our world today and for future generations. For more information, visit www.protectourwinters.org.

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