

More Information about Why the Public Should Own Our Electric Utilities

This website's "Why Public Power" section includes a brief item about the June 2019 TV interview about the many benefits of having the public own our electric utilities instead of letting big business own them. Here is the link to **watch the interview** and/or **read the thorough summary** (including the visuals that our guests provided): <http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-why-the-public-should-own-our-electric-utilities>. The paragraphs below provide more information about the topic. We hope this will entice you to see that web posting and/or connect with the Olympia Public Power's grassroots campaign.

People typically think about "democracy" in terms of government. But why can't we also have democracy in how we run our economy? Why can't our economic institutions – such as our electric utility – respond to the will of the voters?

Two exceptionally knowledgeable guests – Randal Samstag and Steve Johnson -- explain the enormous differences between utilities that are owned by giant private corporations vs. utilities that are owned democratically by the public.

Voters can choose to have local governments own and operate our electric utilities. Dozens of cities and counties in Washington State have long, successful track records of using publicly owned utilities to provide reliable, low-cost electricity to their people.

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is a gigantic business that charges nearly the highest rates among the 65 electric utilities operating in Washington State. Publicly owned electric utilities offer far lower rates. State law guarantees PSE a huge profit for its stockholders, but publicly owned utilities operate on a non-profit basis. Federal law guarantees publicly owned utilities access to low-cost federal power.

PSE is owned by foreign investors over whom we customers have no control. In contrast, publicly owned utilities are accountable to the voters. Instead of sending money away to foreign stockholders, publicly owned utilities keep their money in the local community.

Also, publicly owned electricity have much better reliability and recover more quickly when storms cause outages.

PSE burns fossil fuels to generate 59% of its electricity. State law is forcing PSE to stop burning coal, but PSE wants to convert to burning natural gas, which also is horrible for the climate. In contrast, publicly owned utilities are entitled to "carbon-free" federal hydropower. PSE plans to continue burning fossil fuels for many more years, but a local community that switches to a publicly owned utility can quickly transition to become "carbon-free." Jefferson County WA recently accomplished this when their voters replaced PSE with the Jefferson County Public Utility District (PUD).

Right now a new campaign in Olympia – "Olympia Public Power" – is organizing to replace PSE with a city-owned electric utility that will provide lower rates, better reliability, and sustainable energy. Olympia's municipal utility will be accountable to the voters instead of foreign stockholders. The local organizers are starting now to educate the public and plan to gather Olympia voters' signatures during much of 2020 in order to put a city-wide initiative onto the ballot for the November 2020 election.

This website provides ways for you to contact the Olympia Public Power campaign. Please join!

