

The Federal THRIVE Act for Oregon's 4th Congressional District: How THRIVE Strengthens the Economy, Protects the Environment, and Creates Jobs

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This report describes the economic impacts that would result in Oregon's 4th congressional district if the U.S. Congress were to pass the national THRIVE Act. The 4th district includes the southern half of Oregon's coastal counties, including Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lance and Benton counties and most of Linn and Josephine counties.

The THRIVE Act was introduced in Congress in April 2021, aiming to “Transform, Heal and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy”—i.e. THRIVE—through a range of investments to rebuild the U.S. economy. For the U.S. economy overall, the THRIVE Act would finance over \$1 trillion in investments per year for 10 years in four major areas: clean renewable energy and energy efficiency; infrastructure; agriculture and land restoration; and the care economy, public health and the postal system.

We estimate that Oregon's 4th district would receive about \$2.5 billion per year in THRIVE Act support in these four investment areas. This level of investment will generate roughly 18,000 jobs within the district itself, equal to about 5 percent of the district's current workforce. The newly created jobs will be in a wide range of occupations, including construction, environmental engineering, health care, forestry, accounting, bookkeeping, farm management and farm labor. This higher level of employment in the 4th district would be sustained throughout the 10 years of the investment program (assuming no other major changes in the district's economy were to occur). These 4th district THRIVE investments will also generate an additional 650 jobs throughout the rest of Oregon, and 2,500 in other U.S. states, for an

overall increase of about 21,000 jobs. The table on page 3 provides details on the breakdown in job creation within the district, within Oregon, and for the overall U.S. economy.

Some of the major projects that the THRIVE Act could support in the district would include:

Solar installations. Installing solar panels on rooftops and other artificial surfaces, such as parking lots, will provide affordable clean energy to 4th district residents and businesses. The 4th district, as elsewhere, will also need to build large-scale solar and wind farms to deliver sufficient clean energy supplies throughout the district while also dramatically reducing CO₂ emissions in the area. The small-scale installations and large utility-scale projects can effectively complement each other. Among other factors, installing large numbers of solar panels on artificial surfaces will mean that less land needs to be devoted to utility-scale solar and wind farms in the area. Investing, for example, \$250 million to help finance small-scale solar installations throughout the 4th district could create enough electricity to meet roughly 15 percent of the district's overall electricity demand. This district-wide installation project will also generate over 1,000 jobs within the district and about 1,200 jobs overall.

Energy efficiency building retrofits. In 2001, the State of Oregon's State Energy Efficiency Design Program (SEED) mandated 20 percent improvements in energy efficiency for all public buildings. In 2013, the state then mandated additional 20 percent effi-

ciency improvements as of 2023. However, as of the most recent available data, more than 40 percent of the public buildings have not yet achieved this performance standard. Within the 4th district, following through on this energy efficiency mandate will cut energy costs for the state and municipalities while also driving down CO₂ emissions. Retrofitting all of the low-efficiency buildings in the district will entail replacing aging furnaces and air conditioners with electric heat pumps, tightening building shells through improving insulation and replacing leaky windows, and installing LED lighting fixtures throughout every building. Investing \$50 million per year in these projects will also generate about 300 jobs within the district and 400 jobs overall.

Expanding paid client-employed home-based care for elderly. There are approximately 14,000 residents of Oregon’s 4th district ages 65 and over who require personal care. The State of Oregon presently operates a highly innovative Client-Employed Provider Program through which elderly people in need of care hire the provider of their choice. Adult children, spouses, other family members, neighbors, and friends are all eligible to be hired under this program. At the same time, most hours of elder care support are still provided by family and friends on a voluntary basis. Expanding financial support for the Client-Employed Provider Program through THRIVE would enable these providers to receive pay for at least some of the hours of work they now provide voluntarily. These family members and friends would then be better able to concentrate their paid working hours on care provision, rather than having to also be employed at separate paid jobs in order to earn sufficient income. For example, \$100 million per year in support through THRIVE would enable all 14,000 elderly residents of the 4th district requiring care to pay family members or friends \$20 dollars per hour for an average of an additional two hours per day.

Afforestation and forest management. At present, the 30 million acres of forest throughout Oregon store about 2.6 billion tons of CO₂, an amount equal to roughly 50 percent of annual CO₂ emissions for the overall U.S. economy. But there are still substantial opportunities for the state overall, and the 4th district specifically, to expand its forested areas—i.e. to invest in “afforestation.” Large areas of the 4th district have been transformed into ‘carbon deserts’ due to decades of excessive logging activity. There is likely about 200,000 acres

of mostly pasture lands in the 4th district that could be converted to forest area, at an overall cost of about \$160 million, perhaps paid out over 3 – 5 years. This level of afforestation could then increase the state’s overall CO₂ storage capacity by about 18 million tons once the newly planted trees have reach maturity. This would be equal to about six months of statewide emissions at current emission levels. This \$160 million investment in afforestation in the 4th district—paid out, for example, over four years—would also generate about 520 jobs within the district and 550 jobs overall. In addition to investments in afforestation, the 4th district could direct some of its THRIVE Act support to improving its forest management practices—involving ecologically-based forest thinning and controlled burning—to increase resiliency against climate change impacts. Such forest management methods have long been practiced by the district’s large indigenous population. The stewardship proposals by the region’s tribal communities provide useful models for conservation, restoration, remediation, and reclamation programs.

Repairing or removing dams. There are 117 dams in Oregon’s 4th district. 39 of these dams—one-third of the total—have been rated as having “high-hazard potential” by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. These are dams in which failure or mis-operation is expected to result in loss of life and cause significant economic damage. To date, only 16 of the district’s high-hazard dams have been evaluated with respect to their safety provisions. One of those rated, Wageman Dam, has been rated as high risk and in poor condition. Another one, Ferry Creek, is rated as high hazard and in poor condition. Investments to evaluate the district’s high hazard dams would therefore be an important contribution to the region’s economy. Dams that are in poor condition could either be repaired or removed with THRIVE funding support. A 2014 study of the removal of two dams in the district—the Bronsville Dam on the Calapoola River and the Savage Rapids Dam on the Rogue River—found that removing the dams enabled the rivers to return quickly to conditions close to their natural states, both biologically and physically. Investing \$20 million per year in the district to repair or remove high-hazard dams would generate about 130 jobs within the district and 170 jobs overall.

**THRIVE ACT Investments in OREGON'S 4TH DISTRICT:
Annual Investment Spending and Job Creation through U.S. THRIVE Act**

	THRIVE Investments in Oregon's 4 th District	Job Creation through THRIVE Investments			
		Jobs in 4 th District	Jobs in Rest of Oregon	Jobs in Rest of U.S.	Overall Job Creation
Clean Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	\$925 million	4,124	215	865	5,204
Infrastructure	\$825 million	5,579	205	961	6,745
Agriculture and Land Restoration	\$500 million	4,791	136	450	5,377
Care Economy, Public Health, and Postal Service	\$250 million	3,384	85	292	3,761
TOTALS	\$2.5 billion	17,879	640	2,569	21,088

Sources: See: <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1397-employment-impacts-of-proposed-u-s-economic-stimulus-programs>; and <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1474-methodology-and-calculations-for-clean-energy-cost-estimates-in-proposed-u-s-thrive-agenda-and-related-policy-proposals>.

Further References

PERI THRIVE Report for U.S. Economy:

<https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1397-employment-impacts-of-proposed-u-s-economic-stimulus-programs>

PERI THRIVE Reports for individual U.S. States:

<https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1415-state-level-employment-impacts-of-proposed-national-thrive-agenda>