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Formed by a Congressional act in 1937, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) reliably provides clean and affordable power to a region containing 12.5 million people in the Northwestern United States. The BPA should not divest to private owners; it functions as a self-funded non-profit institution to serve the people of the Pacific Northwest.

Though the BPA is a federal agency, it does not receive federal funding, instead relying on electricity bills to cover costs. Current regional electric bills remain incredibly affordable, but there is no guarantee rates would remain low following a divestment. Private owners are likely to raise prices to maximize profit. This directly contradicts the BPA's founding motives, "to prevent extortion against the public by the giant electric utility holding companies" (BPA.gov). A rising electric bill impacts many people within the region paying for BPA power, and would severely impede the regional economies.

Serious economic degradation also comes in the form of employment. BPA directly employs over 3,000 people, but also has 1.2 million jobs dependent on it. These jobs, essential to middle and lower class families, cannot be protected following privatization; it is unknown what private owners may do. We cannot predict what changes may come about, nor their impact. Why abandon a system that has effectively functioned for the better part of the last century? When combined with raised rates, this could put an undue burden on countless regional families and hinder economic growth.

Some fear that rural lines may be cast aside as private buyers vie for high-profit opportunities. Upon its creation, BPA brought electricity to areas previously overlooked by the prevailing power companies. These rural areas also contain Native American communities.

Though conflicts have previously erupted regarding the necessary infrastructure and its

infringement on their lands, a relationship has developed over the years, for planning purposes. "Following privatization, there is no guarantee [Native Americans] will be taken into account" (power-technology.com). Forgoing privatization better ensures the rights of those in this region who often lack the ability to lobby for their own benefit. Maintenance of the current organization system keeps both our money and our management local.

Proponents of privatization claim it allows for innovation because of the smaller developmental scale. While innovation is generally beneficial, BPA already provides safe and affordable energy to its clientele and further advancements may only increase consumer cost. Furthermore, privatization could cause a loss of local integrity through transfer of ownership. BPA is a large part of our regional history, bringing jobs to this area for the past 80 years.

In undisputedly capitalist America, a locally managed organization such as the BPA is rare. We should hold fast to such an historic group, as it never fails to furnish our electrical needs at a widely affordable price. BPA deserves loyalty and support in the coming years, facing the President's recent budget proposal.

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