



February 3, 2011

The Hon. John W. Fonfara, Co-Chair  
The Hon. Vickie Orsini Nardello, Co-Chair  
Energy and Technology Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Room 3900, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

**RE: H.B. No. 6249 (Raised) *An Act Establishing a Moratorium on the Siting of Wind Projects Until the Adoption of Regulations*, and H.B. No. 6250 (Raised) *An Act Concerning the Siting Council***

Dear Senator Fonfara and Representative Nardello:

I am writing to provide testimony on the above-referenced legislation that would make substantial changes to the permitting process for wind power facilities in Connecticut.

First Wind is an independent, New England-based wind energy company exclusively focused on the development, financing, construction, ownership, and operation of on-shore utility-scale wind power. First Wind has developed and currently operates wind energy projects in the Northeast, West, and in Hawaii, with a total installed capacity of 504 megawatts (MW). Of that amount, 270 MW is located in New England and New York, with another 100 MW now under construction in Maine and Vermont.

First Wind has been actively seeking opportunities in Connecticut to develop wind power for over a year. We are working with a number of landowners in the state to locate suitable sites and have identified potentially attractive prospects. Our analysis suggests that Connecticut is home to suitable sites for utility-scale wind projects that could make meaningful contributions to the state's energy mix.

The uncertainty that these bills would introduce to the siting process in Connecticut could significantly delay and/or discourage investment in the state. The disposition of these bills will send a clear message about whether Connecticut is interested in attracting the economic, energy, and environmental benefits of wind power. In addition to the necessary physical attributes (such as a sufficient wind resource and access to transmission), a predictable, transparent, and timely permitting process is an important characteristic of states in which we seek to invest. First Wind supports the formulation and application of rigorous siting standards, as our successful track record in the Northeast can attest.

As a potential source of major investment, wind power can bring economic opportunity to Connecticut, including good-paying, skilled jobs. A study done by an economist at the University of

Southern Maine concluded that since 2006 each megawatt of wind power constructed in Maine created two jobs and contributed roughly \$200,000 to the state's economy. Operating wind projects throughout the Northeast support community services in host municipalities by providing new sources of property taxes and other direct benefits. In Maine, a turnkey wind power supply chain has emerged as a result of the 257 MW of wind projects built in the state. Construction and engineering companies, environmental consultants, law firms, and small businesses ranging from the hospitality industry to industrial suppliers have benefitted from the development and construction of these projects. These companies are now exporting their services to other states.

The energy and environmental benefits of wind power are well-known. Wind energy can make Connecticut more self-reliant, reduce the amount of fossil fuels burned, and diversify the energy mix. Because the wind is free and inexhaustible, wind energy is insulated from global political and economic conditions, inflation, or fuel shortages. And every megawatt of fossil fuel power that doesn't have to get made means cleaner air for Connecticut.

Finally, wind power can be a piece of the solution to Connecticut's high electricity rates. Sources such as wind that have no fuel costs bid their power into the regional wholesale market at very low prices, which can help reduce the overall wholesale price by displacing more expensive generation. A recent study commissioned by ISO-New England estimated that a significant amount of wind power in New England could reduce wholesale prices by \$5 – 11/MWh – that would be a \$650 million to \$1.4 billion average annual power price decrease in the region. Additionally, without the uncertainty of future fuel costs to be concerned about, wind is able to offer predictable long-term prices at a savings to consumers. In fact, First Wind has entered into long-term contracts in New England that regulators have concluded will result in savings to ratepayers over what they would have paid otherwise.

In conclusion, First Wind encourages the Energy and Technology Committee to signal that Connecticut welcomes investment in wind power. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and would be happy to provide additional information should you or other members of the committee have questions.

Sincerely,



Matthew Kearns  
Vice President, Northeast Development