



Testimony of Environment Connecticut State Director Chris Phelps
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology Committee

2/21/2019

Regarding:

S.B. No. 468, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS ON STATE LAND NEAR PUBLIC HIGHWAYS. (Support)

H.B. No. 5002, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN NEW DEAL.

H.B. No. 5380, AN ACT REDEFINING "CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE" TO INCLUDE CERTAIN USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY GENERATED FROM BIODIESEL AND CREATING A HOMEOWNER-GENERATED USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY PROGRAM. (Oppose)

H.B. No. 5381, AN ACT REDEFINING "CLASS II RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE". (Oppose)

H.B. No. 6237, AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF ENERGY STORAGE PROJECTS AND DISTRIBUTED GENERATION IN THE STATE. (Support)

H.B. No. 6242, AN ACT PROHIBITING SURCHARGES FROM BEING LEVIED ON UTILITY CUSTOMERS TO SUBSIDIZE INTERSTATE NATURAL GAS PIPELINE CAPACITY. (Support)

Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee, my name is Chris Phelps and I am State Director for Environment Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments regarding the bills listed above.

Environment Connecticut is a nonprofit citizen-based environmental advocacy project of Environment America. We work to fight climate change and for a cleaner, greener future for Connecticut and our nation. We represent over 20,000 supporters and activists across Connecticut.

Today, our state and nation face a threat to the health and safety of our citizens, strength of our economy, viability of agricultural systems, and livability of coastal cities and large portions of our country. That threat is created by rapidly rising temperatures and the potentially catastrophic climate change they are causing. Bold action to achieve deep cuts in manmade emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses is necessary if we are to overcome the threat climate change poses to our way of life. The science is clear that to accomplish such pollution cuts requires the shifting of our economy off of fossil fuels and onto 100% clean, zero-carbon, renewable energy sources by no later than 2050. Just 30 years distant.

1. S.B. No. 468, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS ON STATE LAND NEAR PUBLIC HIGHWAYS. (Support)

We support aggressive expansion of solar power in Connecticut. Solar is one of the best available homegrown renewable zero-carbon energy sources available to our state. Maximizing use of solar wherever and whenever possible is a key part of any strategy to achieve a 100% renewable energy future. Utilizing readily available open land along public highways is a strategy that could quickly expand the amount of clean solar power generation serving our state.

We wish to note that this proposal should incorporate provisions to require that any such solar generation is sited in an environmentally appropriate manner with regard to concerns such as habitat preservation.

2. H.B. No. 5002, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN NEW DEAL.

As noted at the beginning of this testimony, overcoming the threat of climate change requires a commitment to moving our economy to reliance upon 100% clean, zero-carbon, renewable energy by no later than 2050. We applaud the efforts of the supporters of this proposal to address this major undertaking and look forward to working with other stakeholders, this committee, and members of the General Assembly on this issue. With that thought, we offer these suggestions for what a “Green New Deal” for Connecticut could include:

- This legislation should begin with a clear, unambiguous commitment to meeting Connecticut’s energy needs with 100% renewable energy by no later than 2050. This would be in accordance with the state’s existing greenhouse gas emissions targets and climate plans. Such a commitment should put our state on a path to 100% renewable energy for electric generation, building heating and cooling, and transportation, to name three of the largest energy sectors.

Beyond establishing a 100% renewable energy goal, this legislation can, and should, include specific immediate actions that Connecticut can take to make progress towards achieving that goal. Such actions could include:

- Aligning the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard for electric generation with a 100% zero-carbon renewable energy goal by requiring that 50% of Connecticut’s electric demand be met with Class I renewables by 2030, 100% by no later than 2050, and;
- Phasing out non-renewable and carbon-emitting generation sources from inclusion in the Class I tier of the RPS between now and 2025 at the latest.
- Commit Connecticut to procuring no less than 2GW of offshore wind energy by no later than 2030.
- Restoring the right of Connecticut property owners to go solar while receiving the full value of the solar power they produce on their property by reversing the anti-consumer, anti-solar provisions contained in PA 18-50.
- Establish ambitious goals for expansion of solar power use wherever viable in Connecticut. Use of lands near public highways, as proposed in S.B. 468 is just one good idea to do this. Others include a requirement that new residential construction incorporate solar generation as California is doing, building solar canopies on parking lots, & etc. To support such growth of solar installations, this bill could leverage existing policies such as the “ZREC” program, community solar, and more, and establish an ambitious overall solar installation goal, such as 1GW of new solar installations within 5 years. Doing so would result in significant progress towards the state’s climate goals, and also could help revitalize the state’s solar power industry.
- Any strategy to shift our transportation sector to 100% renewable energy will require widespread adoption of electric vehicles that are, in turn, charged using electricity generated from renewable sources. Such widespread use of electric vehicles will require construction of charging infrastructure beyond single family residential home charging, and the limited public charging infrastructure that has been installed to-date. Green New Deal legislation could include requirements for charging stations in all public parking locations, encourage of existing publicly available parking locations with charging stations, and requirements that all new residential and commercial construction incorporate charging and charging-ready parking.

3. H.B. No. 5380, AN ACT REDEFINING “CLASS I RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE” TO INCLUDE CERTAIN USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY GENERATED FROM BIODIESEL AND CREATING A HOMEOWNER-GENERATED USEFUL THERMAL ENERGY PROGRAM. (Oppose)

We have testified in opposition to similar proposals to HB 5380 in previous years, and wish to reiterate that position today. “Class I Renewable Energy Source” refers specifically to electric

generation sources covered by the Class I tier of the electric Renewable Portfolio Standard. Attempting to include non-electric generating energy sources within the RPS is like attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole. Additionally, we have noted previously, confronting the threat of climate change requires phasing out our dependence upon carbon-emitting energy sources. In the instance of the RPS policy, this will require restricting inclusion in the Class I tier of the RPS to electric generation sources that are renewable and, unlike biodiesel, do not emit carbon-dioxide.

4. H.B. No. 5381, AN ACT REDEFINING “CLASS II RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE”. (Oppose)

This bill would encourage increased dependence upon trash incineration to manage Connecticut’s municipal solid waste (MSW). Additionally, by eliminating the ability for utilities to comply with the Class II RPS requirement by using Class I renewable energy credits, HB 5381 could reduce hinder progress towards a renewable energy future while simultaneously incentivizing increased polluting trash incineration. Instead, our state should redouble efforts to reduce MSW generation, increase recycling, and over the long-term, phase out its dependence on polluting trash incineration.

5. H.B. No. 6237, AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF ENERGY STORAGE PROJECTS AND DISTRIBUTED GENERATION IN THE STATE. (Support)

Energy storage and distributed generation (such as solar) will be play a vital role in the shift to 100% renewable energy. We support HB 6237, and urge the General Assembly to take this proposal a step further and establish a requirement that Connecticut’s utilities procure significant amounts of energy storage within the next five years, and that such storage capacity be utilized to support accelerated deployment of zero-carbon renewable energy sources serving the state.

6. H.B. No. 6242, AN ACT PROHIBITING SURCHARGES FROM BEING LEVIED ON UTILITY CUSTOMERS TO SUBSIDIZE INTERSTATE NATURAL GAS PIPELINE CAPACITY. (Support)

We strongly support H.B. 6242. Existing CT statute allows electric ratepayers, both individual consumers and businesses, to be charged enormous sums to finance new gas pipeline infrastructure in the Northeast. As we have previously noted, the threat of climate change requires that we shift our economy away from fossil fuels such as gas, and to 100% renewable energy, and that we do so within the next 30 years or less. Therefore, investments in large scale new fossil fuel infrastructure, such as gas pipelines and power plants, are likely to become stranded assets long before the end of their useful lifetimes. As such, the existing statute exposing Connecticut families and businesses to that financial risk is both terrible economic and environmental policy and should be repealed.