

07.02.08 - Energy Bill Signing

Governor Deval L. Patrick

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July 2, 2008

As Delivered

Speaker DiMasi, Senate President Murray, General Coakley, Congressman Delahunt, Secretary Bowles, our partners in state and local government, in all the quasis. Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, I am here today to sign into law the best clean energy bill in America. [applause]

The Green Communities Act is a giant step forward toward a clean energy future and a safer environment for Massachusetts, for the United States, and for the whole world. It does so by unlocking the power of efficiency of renewable energy, and of clean energy technology.

Massachusetts, as many of you here know, has been among the nation's leaders in promoting energy efficiency for a long time now. But we have artificially capped our investment in efficiency, even though efficiency investments generally are a third as much, a third cheaper, than what it takes to create traditional electricity supply. From now on, conventional generation will have to compete with efficiency for our energy dollars.

In a number of ways, the act also promotes development of renewable power sources; it authorizes long term contracts for renewable energy producers, which stabilizes the markets and enables renewable energy entrepreneurs to raise the capitol they need to expand the industry; it allows utilities to install solar panels in individual's homes, relieving homeowners of that costly upfront investment and expanding adoption of solar alternatives; and it gives residential and commercial owners maximum benefit from the solar and wind power that they install themselves by allowing them to sell excess energy back into the electric grid at a very good rate.

Fostering new energy sources and efficiency strategies means new technologies, new investments, new companies, and new jobs. Jobs in research, in high-tech engineering, as well as in manufacturing clean energy components, and installing and repairing new technologies. We are already working closely with our community colleges to create workforce training programs to meet those training needs.

And finally, this legislation affirms our participation in the regional greenhouse gas initiative, part of a strategy to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect us from harmful health affects, and environmental degradation and better steward the natural world for generations to come.

In September, this Commonwealth will lead the nation's first auction of greenhouse gas emissions allowances. Climate change is the challenge of our time and with this legislation, we in Massachusetts are rising to meet that challenge.

I don't think anyone here has to be reminded that this legislation could not come at a more opportune time. Crude oil is over \$140 a barrel, more than twice the price of what it was just a year ago. Everyone, -- everyone -- is feeling that price at the pump and in our heating, cooling, and electricity bills. The Green Communities Act is the most sweeping overhaul of the way we make, buy, and use energy in more than a decade and it is right on time.

We have a lot of people to thank, none more so, and I say this with due respect to all of my other partners in government, but none more so than the Speaker of the House, Sal DiMasi. Speaker DiMasi was among the very first on Beacon Hill to recognize both our energy challenges and our energy opportunities. This bill reflects his vision and we would not be where we are without the leadership that he has shown from the start, and Sal I thank you for that.

I also want to commend and thank Senate President Murray who not only came to our side on this initiative but also broadened the agenda by pushing the Oceans Bill, which we signed just a few weeks ago. She recognized the comprehensive environmental stewardship meant addressing the power generation opportunities offshore as well as on land. The Oceans Bill is a part of a bigger energy and environmental picture that her vision and leadership made complete, and I thank you Senator Murray.

And in her constantly, consistently thoughtful way she reminds me not to forget it was Senator Bob O'Leary who has given us such leadership. [applause] Chairman Morrissey and Chairman Dempsey and their respective staff have been keen, diligent, imaginative, and totally engaged partners in every step of this work. It has been an absolute pleasure for all of us to work with them and I thank them and all the members of the legislature for delivering a really fine result. [applause]

And Secretary Bowles and his team have done an absolutely outstanding job. [applause] They have gotten it consistently right on both the substance and the process and I'm just so proud that you're on the team. Thank you.

Efficiency alternatives and foresight, these are the watchwords of our clean energy future. These will be the cornerstones for the next generation of technology innovation here and all around the world. Thanks to you, all of us here on this stage, all of you who have taken a part in this, Massachusetts will be out front. And that's exactly where we ought to be. I'm proud to be with you all, thank you.