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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

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### **The Wind Siting Reform Act (aka The Wind Bill)**

*Formal Title: An Act Relative to Comprehensive Siting Reform for Land Based Wind Projects*

*Sponsors: Rep. Frank Smizik, Sen. Barry Finegold*

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*Senate Contact: [caittriona.fitzgerald@state.ma.us](mailto:caittriona.fitzgerald@state.ma.us)*

*H1775/S1666*

This bill encourages the development of land-based wind farms over 2 megawatts (MW). A single, large wind turbine (1.25 MW) generates 1.25 MW of electricity and can power about 1,000 typical homes.

- This bill will set up statewide siting standards to rationalize the costs and simplify the criteria for developers to build wind turbines. These new standards will be as protective to municipalities as existing state laws.
- At both state and local levels, a large number of permits and approvals are now required. Current laws allow for appeals of almost all these permits. Needless to say, it can take years to get the necessary approvals for wind projects. This system has killed many promising projects.
- This bill would give wind turbine facilities the same permitting rights as coal and LNG (liquefied natural gas) plants. The current laws favor of coal-burning and other polluting facilities because electricity-generating projects larger than 100 MW have a “one-stop” permitting procedure that supersedes all other state and local permits. Land-based wind projects are much smaller than 100 MW and therefore cannot take advantage of this permitting.

A common piece of misinformation surrounding this proposed bill is that it takes away “home rule authority”. The bill, as enacted by the Senate, states that if a community rejects a wind project, the Siting Board **has no authority to override that decision**. The developer or proponent’s only remedy is to go to court, which is exactly how the law stands today. If a community approves a wind project, opponents could appeal to the Siting Board.

### **Why should we support this bill?**

Wind energy will never be depleted, has no emissions, and is fully renewable and sustainable. Wind is an important part of our statutory renewable energy portfolio standard. As of March 2010, we were only generating 17 MW of wind energy in Massachusetts although our goal is 2,000 MW by 2020. Cape Wind will bring us up to approximately 440 MW.

The average price we pay for fossil fuel-generated residential electricity in Massachusetts is now about 15 cents/kWh (kilowatt hour). The price for wind-generated electricity has dropped steadily in the last 20 years and is projected to be around 19 cents/kWh when Cape Wind goes on line. Wind will continue to gain advantage as the cost of hydrocarbons rises and the price of wind energy stays the same, free. The present cost of renewable energy seems higher than that generated by gas or coal because the price we are paying for it does not reflect the **true cost** of the electricity produced. The true cost of electricity must include the cost of the environmental destruction of mining and burning fossil fuels, including polluted water and air and the dumping of toxic waste materials that increases health care costs and human mortality rates. There are also national security issues that we are just beginning to understand. Massachusetts is almost entirely dependent on outside fossil fuel sources for our energy needs. The wind energy bill will create new opportunities to promote the green economy and increase renewable energy in the commonwealth.