



Senate Committee Passes Legislation as RES Coalition Formed

In a 15-8 vote, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed energy legislation that includes a renewable electricity standard (RES) of 15% by 2021, with states allowed to fulfill up to 4% of the requirement through energy efficiency measures.

Throughout the process the wind industry has pushed for a stronger standard, most recently in a press teleconference announcing the RES Alliance for Jobs, a coalition of almost two dozen renewable energy companies and national renewable energy associations that support such legislation. The industry has stated that in its current form the RES would not result in new wind energy development and that thousands of potential jobs would be left on the table. The bill can still be amended when it goes to the Senate floor. In response to the vote of the committee, which is chaired by Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), AWEA released the following statement from CEO Denise Bode:

“We are grateful to Senator Bingaman for his leadership on this issue. As Chairman of the Energy Committee, the Senator’s commitment to supporting development of America’s clean, renewable energy resources has been critical to moving the RES through committee and on to the next phase of the process. We appreciate his work and the commitment of other Senators on the committee who voted against amendments designed to weaken the standard.

“We look forward to working with Senator Bingaman and other supporters to strengthen the RES so that it will get new jobs created. A meaningful national standard is urgently needed to encourage investment in renewable energy, create new jobs for Americans, diversify and secure our nation’s energy supply, and avoid carbon emissions. With a strong RES in place, we can continue to lead the world’s new energy economy, keep jobs and investment right here in the U.S., and demonstrate our commitment to solving global climate change.”

A bill passed by the House of Representatives’ Energy and Commerce Committee includes an RES of 20% by 2020—but it permits states to meet up to 8% of the standard through energy efficiency improvements. As with the Senate bill, the end result would be that the renewables industry would not make the kind of contribution it can to the economy.

The press teleconference announcing the coalition was characterized by Bode and the other participants underscoring the link between renewables and job creation. Edward Lowe, general manager for renewable energy development for wind turbine manufacturer GE, offered a concrete example of how sound policy means jobs. He said that 10-12 of GE’s foreign suppliers have said they would be interested in setting up plants in the U.S. “if they saw the long-term commitment” from policymakers.

“The renewable business is a global business,” said Lowe. “Any country aspiring to be a leader in renewable energy manufacturing has to have a long-term, stable domestic market.”

Also participating in the conference call were Bob Cleaves of the Biomass Power Association and Charlie Gay of Applied Solar.

In the Senate vote, Republicans voting in favor of the legislation included Sam Brownback (Kan.), Bob Corker (Tenn.), and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska). Mary Landrieu (La.) and Robert Menendez (N.J.) were the two Democrats voting against the measure. If passed by the two chambers, the Senate and House bills would ultimately go to conference committee to be reconciled.

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