



## **Senate RES Gets Amended as Industry Ramps Up Efforts and Points to Benefits**

As the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the most part wrapped up consideration of amendments to a national renewable electricity standard (RES), representatives of the renewable energy industry called on Congress to strengthen RES proposals before both the House and Senate.

While much of the committee's work is done, the RES could still be strengthened when it goes to the Senate floor. On Thursday executives from the renewable energy industry held a press conference and also met with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, telling the leaders that current RES provisions will not result in renewable energy deployment or new clean energy jobs in the near term. The U.S. will fall behind other countries, and jobs that would otherwise be created in the U.S. will move elsewhere, they said.

"The U.S. was the No. 1 country in new wind installations in 2008," said AWEA CEO Denise Bode. "Without a strong RES the U.S. will fall behind China and Europe—both of which have aggressive and binding renewable energy targets in place."

Under current RES bills, Bode said, some 75% of new green jobs will be created in China and Europe.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has accepted a number of amendments to their version of the RES. The bill includes a 15% RES by 2021, with 4% potentially supplied by energy efficiency. AWEA has been seeking an RES of 25% by 2025.

Under the committee's amendments put in place this week, new nuclear facilities and coal with carbon capture and sequestration would be eligible to be deducted from a utility's base used to determine RES compliance. The amendments also extend the list of eligible resources to include biogas. Some of the changes pertaining to renewable energy credits (RECs) include:

- coal-mined methane as well as waste to energy facilities would be eligible for RECs,
- incremental hydro improvements since 1992, not 2001 as originally proposed, would receive RECs, and
- RECs could be used for renewable electric generation even if the renewable electricity is not transmitted.

Among other amendments is one introduced by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) that would allow state public utility commissions or electric utilities to waive all or part of the RES requirement in a given year if transmission constraints prevent delivery of service.

Some amendments that would have watered down the RES even more were defeated, and a number of Senators spoke of the need to strengthen the RES when the legislation reached the Senate floor.

“I believe a strong renewable electricity standard is key to continued economic growth and job creation,” said Iowa Governor Chet Culver, co-chair of the Governors’ Wind Energy Coalition, who also attended the Reid and Pelosi meetings. “Wind energy is essential to helping Iowa—and the country—recover from this national economic challenge, by creating green collar jobs, and producing clean energy, which will power homes and businesses nationwide.”

“A strong renewable electricity standard will create more American jobs, grow the U.S. economy, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil,” said Representative Bruce Braley (D-Iowa), who joined the wind industry leaders at a press conference. “We can and must do more to promote the development of renewable energy. That’s why I’m going to keep fighting in Congress for a strong renewable electricity standard.”

Senator Mark Udall (D-Colo.) also at the press conference, noted that wind and solar companies have brought over 3,000 jobs to Colorado, thanks in part to the state’s RES.

*Source: Wind Energy Weekly, 5 June 2009*