



Wind Industry Expresses Hope, Concern Over Weakened RES

AWEA expressed both hope and disappointment concerning a deal struck among Democrats in the House Energy & Commerce Committee for a 15% renewable electricity standard (RES) that could be shaved to as low as 12%.

The legislation, which is part of a broader energy and climate bill, actually calls for a 20% standard, with 15% being met with renewable energy and 5% through energy-efficiency measures. But the agreement also gives governors the option of submitting a petition to reduce the renewables requirement by another 3% if they say they cannot meet the RES.

The agreement was received with a degree of ambivalence because the wind industry has long recognized the importance of an RES yet, in its current form, the legislation would leave thousands of green jobs on the table and does not do enough to foster the development of renewable energy.

Earlier this week AWEA issued the following statement by CEO Denise Bode:

“The U.S. wind energy industry is hopeful because the agreement reached in the House Energy and Commerce Committee recognizes the importance of a national renewable electricity standard—the most immediate and direct way to create jobs and reduce carbon emissions—and we thank Chairmen Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edward Markey (D-Mass.) for their efforts. However, we are disappointed that the renewable energy target in the bill could be as low as 12% by 2020—less than one-half the level proposed by President Obama and Chairman Markey. And, from an employment standpoint, by lowering the standard and limiting additional deployment, well over 100,000 jobs are being left on the cutting-room floor.

“It is clear from the election results this past November and numerous polls that Americans across the political spectrum put renewable energy deployment near the top of their list of policy priorities for very good reasons. The voters are right, because wind and other renewable energy technologies are one of very few options that can be deployed on a large scale quickly in this critical decade to reverse greenhouse gas emissions growth and create new domestic manufacturing jobs. America is competing for these new manufacturing jobs with 37 other countries, including China, that have firm renewable electricity commitments in place. We look forward to working with Chairmen Waxman and Markey and the House leadership as the process moves forward to ensure that the RES provision is strengthened.”

Markup on comprehensive energy legislation in the House is set to start Monday. Markup may also occur in the Senate sometime next week on legislation containing an RES.

AWEA and the wind industry have been working hard to point out the bill's serious flaws and highlight the broad spectrum of support that a strong RES enjoys. A May 14 letter to Senate and House leadership from members of AWEA and the industry underscores the importance of a strong RES. "We are concerned that the significantly lower renewable targets currently being discussed, as compared to those proposed by President Obama, Chairman Bingaman, and Chairman Markey, will severely blunt the signal for companies like ours that manufacture turbines and components to invest billions of dollars to expand production and our workforces in the U.S.," the letter states. "America is competing for renewable energy manufacturing jobs with 37 other countries, including China, that have firm renewable electricity commitments in place. Now is the time for bold leadership to secure these jobs for the U.S."

A national poll conducted by Garin Hart Yang Research Group from April 29 to May 1 found that 75% of voters favor an RES proposal requiring electric utility companies across the nation to generate at least 25% of their electricity through renewable energy sources by 2025; moreover, that support is deep: a 53% majority strongly favors a national RES, dwarfing the 16% of those who oppose (both "strongly" and "somewhat"). Support for the RES is also bipartisan: 62% of Republicans favor the RES proposal, as do 71% of independents and 86% of Democrats.

Source: Wind Energy Weekly, 15 May 2009