

FrederickNewsPost.com

Potential wind-power bill draws mixed reactions

Originally published December 30, 2010

By [Ed Waters Jr.](#)

A bill to promote offshore wind-power projects may cause it's share of controversy during the next Maryland General Assembly session.

The proposal has the support of Sen. Robert J. Garagiola, a Montgomery County Democrat, who will be a guest speaker at an educational program on wind power in Urbana on Jan. 6.

Two other Democrats, Sen. Paul G. Pinsky of Prince George's County and Delegate Thomas Hucker of Montgomery County, both say they will enter legislation mandate that utility companies sign long-term contracts with offshore wind-power firms to help fund those ventures.

On his website, Pinsky notes that he was involved in the Wind Vision conference held in Annapolis on Dec. 4. His bill would "require companies to seek renewable energy in their portfolios and sign long-term contracts to assure the financial viability of the cost" of such projects, Pinsky states on his website. "Delaware is committed, Maryland should be next."

Hucker, on his website, says Maryland could create as much as two-thirds of its power needs with wind systems "and become an exporter of energy if we aggressively pursue renewable wind energy."

The educational program, set for 7 to 8:15 p.m. Jan. 6 at Centerville Elementary School, 3601 Carriage Hill Drive, Urbana, is sponsored by the Sugarloaf Conservancy, Friends of Frederick County, Sierra Club and Montgomery Countryside Alliance. The event is free and open to the public and no registration is necessary.

"We support the legislation," said Doug Kaplan, president of the Sugarloaf Conservancy. Kaplan's group has been one of several grassroots organizations opposing the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) project. The group said the utility companies need to consider alternative energy sources, such as wind, before building the 275-mile, \$2.1 billion project across three states.

Other speakers at the Jan. 6 event will include Bob Mitchell, CEO of Trans-Elect, the Mid-Atlantic Wind Connection; Keith Harrington of Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and Lise Van Susteren of the National Wildlife Federation.

But Sen. David Brinkley, a Frederick Republican, is calling the proposed bill "a bad idea.

"It is trying to propel companies into renewable stuff. The cost will be passed on to the consumer," Brinkley said.

Delegate-elect Patrick Hogan, also a Republican from Frederick, said the bill may go too far.

"We should encourage alternative energy, but mandating contracts with the state or between private companies might be overstepping bounds," Hogan said.

Todd Meyers, a spokesman for Allegheny Energy, said the company won't comment until they've reviewed the bill, including how it might affect rates for customers.

Brigitte Fortin, a spokeswoman for the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club, applauds the idea of promoting wind power.

"It is a wise move to incentivize and invest in wind power in Maryland," she said.

Fortin said an independent study by the Abell Foundation and University of Delaware showed that offshore wind could provide 67 percent of Maryland's electric needs.

"Compared to blowing off mountaintops in West Virginia and polluting the air, the choice is clear. Wind power will bring manufacturing jobs to Maryland, reduce our dependency on ever-diminishing fossil fuel reserves and reduce global warming," Fortin said.

IF YOU GO

Wind power educational program

WHEN: 7 to 8:15 p.m. Jan. 6

WHERE: Centerville Elementary School, 3601 Carriage Hill Drive, Urbana

WHO: Sponsored by the Sugarloaf Conservancy, Friends of Frederick County, Sierra Club and Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Please send comments to [webmaster](#) or contact us at 301-662-1177.

Copyright 1997-10 Randall Family, LLC. All rights reserved. Do not duplicate or redistribute in any form.
The Frederick News-Post [Privacy Policy](#). Use of this site indicates your agreement to our [Terms of Service](#).