



July 18, 2016

Rep. Brian Dempsey
Rep. Thomas Golden
Rep. Brad Jones
State House
Boston, MA

Sen. Ben Downing
Sen. Mark Pacheco
Sen. Bruce Tarr

Dear Conference Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts commends the House and Senate for their efforts to pass comprehensive, meaningful energy legislation this session. Both S2400 and H4385 demonstrate a commitment to clean, renewable energy and a transition away from fossil fuels.

The League has long advocated for strong environmental policies, understanding that meaningful environmental governance is closely tied to the health of our ecosystem and the well-being of society, a necessary foundation for our democracy. U.S. military leaders see climate change as the “[mother of all risks](#)” that acts as a threat multiplier. Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, stated that “in a world of business as usual, we’re in a world of business as urgent” in addressing climate change.

The scientific consensus is that the pace of climate change is accelerating. And it is hitting home. A recent University of Massachusetts [report](#) indicated Boston is particularly vulnerable. Acting sooner rather than later is economically as well as environmentally sound. The rapid growth of wind power, solar power and other sources of renewable energy has made the cost of clean energy competitive with that of fossil fuels. Promoting the adoption of renewable energy will further stimulate the market, bringing jobs and businesses to the Commonwealth and keeping Massachusetts dollars in Massachusetts.

The need for strong leadership has never been more apparent as we face both the threat of climate change impacts and the need to counteract the deliberate, well-funded campaign of the past several decades to undermine science, sow doubt about our impact on earth, and stall responsible action.

S2400 and H4385 are clear steps in the right direction, but acting in a “business as urgent” world calls for doubling down on clean, renewable energy. It is time to unleash the incredible potential of our state’s many resources, including its brain power, research capability and ingenuity. We can capitalize on our status as the “Saudi Arabia of wind” to move more quickly to a 100% clean energy future. Such a course is not only doable, it is economically viable as evidenced by the success of programs in Denmark, Germany, the UK, Scotland and Ireland.

With “business as urgent” in mind, the League of Women Voters urges you to consider including the following provisions:

- A minimum procurement requirement of 2,000 megawatts of off-shore wind, as well as increases of other forms of clean, renewable energy;
- Increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard growth rate from 1% to 2% per annum;
- A ban on ratepayer fees to utilities to finance construction of new natural gas pipelines. The state’s energy portfolio reflects an overreliance on natural gas. In addition to protecting ratepayers, we need to invest in new, clean energy infrastructure including updating the transmission system to support increases and distribution of renewable energy;
- Fixing gas leaks, an immediately effective way to significantly reduce emissions and cost to ratepayers;
- Promoting energy efficiency and the development and use of energy storage;
- Removing solar net-metering caps for predictable support of solar development, broadening access to solar energy for low-income households and incentives for community solar projects;
- Establishing a first in the nation free home energy rating and disclosure program;
- Promoting the adoption of electric vehicles through incentives, increased access to EV charging stations, and mandated transition to electric vehicles in public fleets;
- Pricing carbon emissions through a market-based approach as a proven tool to drive economy-wide emissions reductions;
- Eliminating the demonstrably unnecessary “remuneration” charge for utilities.

In spite of our efforts, we are failing to meet our emissions reduction targets as a state and as a nation. With strong energy legislation, Massachusetts is poised to lead and be a model for other states, as it has on so many critical issues.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts urges the Committee to respond to the call and the moral imperative to act as expeditiously as possible to ensure a viable, healthy ecosystem and livable planet by thinking big and releasing a truly strong, comprehensive and forward-looking energy bill, for the sake of current and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Cherdack".

Jean Cherdack

President