

## Final RPS hearing

Robert Armstrong, Conway, MA 413-625-2216

My name is Bob Armstrong, and I'm a selectman in Conway.

Here in New England we have a well functioning Grid Operator, ISO-NE, who attempts to assure we have a reliable supply of electric generation and that the power producers compete on price to sell their power into the grid. This has caused coal to be replaced by cheaper sources like natural gas in Massachusetts and by oil in New Hampshire and Vermont. States can subvert this competition by subsidizing more expensive sources to make them competitive. Here in Massachusetts we passed a state RPS bill that subsidizes clean generation like solar, wind and hydro by requiring our electric utilities like Eversource and National Grid to purchase clean Energy Certificates, RECs, from carbon free producers to encourage them to grow and replace fossil fuel generation with clean power, lowering the percent of greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere. As a state, we take climate change seriously, and our state legislators have passed laws like the RPS that are demanded by our citizens.

Not all the states in New England take climate change quite so seriously. New Hampshire and Maine directly subsidize their dirty biomass generators to protect their lumber industry. Without subsidy, just like coal, wood generation is too expensive to compete with

cheaper sources, so they directly subsidize it with money raised by state taxes. Massachusetts does not do this, and our wood burning plants have almost disappeared.

When the RPS was passed by our legislature, the detailed rules that carry out the legislation were hammered out by state committees and impacted groups including citizens and respected scientists. These RPS rules did allow for wood burning plants, but they required them to burn cleanly. Clean biomass plants qualify for the RPS subsidies, and a few are producing power today. Without the subsidies, these plants cannot compete with cheaper sources, again, just like coal. The rules supported a compromise, qualifying for subsidies if you truly minimize greenhouse gas emissions. But this compromise has not been accepted by the lumber and forestry industry. So under Gov. Baker, who has loaded the DOER with lumber industry representatives, the DOER is now rushing through rule changes to strike down the requirement that wood burning plants have to be clean. You'll notice that in these hearings, there have been few proponents of the changes who are trying to hoodwink you with the false claim that wood burns cleanly, that these plants won't emit large amounts of greenhouse gases and other particulates that contribute to asthma. They argue that municipalities and our state forests need a cheap way to dispose of their wood debris. Rather than write and pass legislation to fix a real problem, they're trying to slip

these changes into the regulations intended to subsidize industries that fight climate change. They know that laws promoting wood burning would be very hard to pass, so they are doing it under the table.

When this rule change takes effect, it will immediately enable the financing of the Palmer Renewable Energy wood burning plant here in Springfield that has carefully protected its permits since the original rules were put in place. It would not be profitable under the current rules. Palmer talks about this rule change like it's a 'done deal' and they are already trying to take orders for power from this plant. They've bought off the DOER and it's doing their bidding.

Far worse, when these rule changes take effect, it will allow our Massachusetts utilities to buy clean energy certificates from all the dirty wood plants in New Hampshire and Maine that today cannot compete on price without state subsidies. These states are part of ISO-NE, and this change will allow them to sell RECs to our Massachusetts utilities. Your electric bill will include subsidies to dirty wood plants in New Hampshire and Maine. To me, this feels like a deal between state governors to subsidize Maine wood burning plants in exchange for letting us build power lines down through Maine to carry Canadian Hydro. That's a deal I don't think we should be making.

Thank you