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Despite Growing Economic Benefits of Clean Energy & Strong Support of Voters Across North Carolina, Will Legislators Halt this Success Story?

Legislators to debate House Bill 298, which would repeal NC's clean energy law on Wednesday

RALEIGH – A number of recent studies show that clean energy development is yielding impressive benefits for electricity customers, businesses and local communities across North Carolina while enjoying strong support among voters. However, despite these positive developments for clean energy, some state legislators in Raleigh are considering legislation this week that would dismantle the progress that has been achieved and serve as an anchor on our state's rapidly-growing clean energy industry and its more than 15,200 full-time equivalent employees.

“Clean energy is now being embraced by people from across the political spectrum and all around the state,” said Ivan Urlaub, Executive Director of the NC Sustainable Energy Association. “Policies such as North Carolina's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (REPS) law have proven to be a workhorse for the state, not only in terms of the increased choice for energy sources they produce, but also for the thousands of new jobs, expanded business opportunities, and needed cost savings they generate.”

According to a recent study by RTI International and La Capra Associates, Inc., North Carolina consumers stand to realize more than \$173 million in cost savings between 2007 and 2026 due to the state's clean energy policies, including the REPS. The same study also showed that the total economic benefit of clean energy development in North Carolina from 2007-2012 was \$1.7 billion, with the state's clean energy policies actually serving as a net revenue generator for the state of \$113 million. Rural counties have seen their share of these gains, benefiting by more than \$100 million of new clean energy investment in each of three counties - Davidson, Robeson and Person Counties. In a finding with particular relevance to the public, the study also found that North Carolina experienced a net gain in employment of 21,162 “job years” from 2007-2012 resulting from clean energy development. (A job year is one person working full-time for a year.)

A separate statewide public opinion survey also sheds light on views related to energy held by North Carolinians. The survey, conducted earlier this year by Fallon Research, confirmed that North Carolinians overwhelmingly support the increased use of clean energy sources like solar, biomass or wind energy. According to the poll results, 75.7% of Republicans, 89% of Democrats, and 81.6% of Independents (82.6% overall support) said state leaders and elected officials in North Carolina should seek more alternative or renewable energy sources in order to provide consumers and businesses with electricity. In a finding with particular relevance to the state's elected officials, nearly 70% of respondents to the survey also declared the REPS law itself a good idea. Adding to this drumbeat, a solid 85% of respondents expressed support for new energy policies that would create opportunities for clean energy companies that use renewable energy resources to offer electricity services directly to consumers and businesses in North Carolina.

These findings reveal the strong appeal of clean energy just as the North Carolina General Assembly prepares to hold a hearing on [House Bill 298](#) on Wednesday, April 3, 2013 in the Commerce and Job Development Subcommittee on Energy and Emerging Markets. The meeting will begin at 11 a.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in downtown Raleigh. Running against public sentiment and a host of positive economic statistics, the bill seeks to repeal the REPS passed originally in 2007 as part of (then) Senate Bill 3, which was a comprehensive energy plan that garnered overwhelming bipartisan support.

“Policies such as the REPS open the playing field for additional energy sources, such as solar, biomass and wind, while creating jobs and pumping valuable private investments into our state and local communities,” said Betsy McCorkle, Director of Government Affairs for the NC Sustainable Energy Association. “There is now broad awareness among the public that the growth of these clean energy sectors helps to spur innovation and market competition that can result in more affordable bills for all electricity consumers.”

Further underscoring the importance of clean energy to the North Carolina economy, according to the 2012 NC Clean Energy Industries Census released last fall by the NC Sustainable Energy Association, North Carolina’s clean energy sector accounted for over 15,200 full-time (FTE) employees and boasted over 1,100 companies found in all regions of the state. These companies generated at least \$3.7 billion in annual revenues from in-state and out-of-state activity.

About the Studies

The NC Sustainable Energy Association commissioned the study by RTI International and La Capra Associates, Inc. as an independent and objective economic analysis focused on the impacts of clean energy policy in the state. Released on February 18, 2013, *The Economic, Utility Portfolio, and Rate Impact of Clean Energy Development in North Carolina*, focused on key policy drivers and the economic and fiscal impacts of clean energy development, and the ratepayer impacts associated with this development. Source:

<http://energync.org/blog/ncsea-news/2013/02/18/new-report-shows-clean-energy-s-positive-impact-on-north-carolina-s-economy-and-utility-rates/>.

The poll, conducted January 27th-30th of 2013 by Fallon Research, surveyed 803 North Carolina registered voters (landline and cellular phone numbers) on their support or opposition to a number of energy related issues. Results from the survey were first released on February 28, 2013. Source:

<http://energync.org/blog/ncsea-news/2013/02/28/republicans-democrats-and-independents-in-north-carolina-all-support-increasing-the-use-of-clean-energy-resources/>.

The 2012 North Carolina Clean Energy Industries Census, released October 10, 2012 by the NC Sustainable Energy Association, is an annual Census that surveyed over 1,100 North Carolina clean energy companies from mid-summer through early September, 2012. For purposes of the Census, clean energy was assumed to include renewable energy, energy efficiency, high performance building, smart grid, energy storage and electric vehicles. Source: <http://energync.org/blog/ncsea-news/2012/10/10/ncsea-announces-2012-nc-clean-energy-industries-census/>.

About the Hearing

The hearing on House Bill 298 will be held Wednesday, April 3, 2013 before the North Carolina General Assembly’s Commerce and Job Development Subcommittee on Energy and Emerging Markets. The hearing is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in downtown Raleigh. There will be an audio feed via the NCGA's website for those unable to attend in person. To access the audio go to the following link (<http://www.ncleg.net/Audio/Audio.html>) and then click on “Appropriations Committee Room (Rm 643)”.

About the NC Sustainable Energy Association:

Founded in 1978, the NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization of individuals, businesses, government and non-profits working to ensure a sustainable future by promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency in North Carolina through education, public policy and economic development. NCSEA has been the "go-to" leader in shaping North Carolina's commitment to renewable energy, energy efficiency, high performance building, smart grid and electric vehicle jobs and economic opportunities in communities all across our state. Learn more at www.energync.org