

Testimony in opposition to H7126: Governor's Budget Amendment 7, Art. 11, Sect. 7, 8, 11

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To Chair Abney and the honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I strongly oppose the Governor's Budget, Amendment 7, Art. 11, Sect. 7, 8, 11:

H7127, Article 11–Section 10: Net Metering

I oppose actions to slow down Net Metering and make solar energy less attractive. We need more solar, a lot more in fact. Net metering is a win/win for RI ratepayers and the utility company. Bringing more renewable energy onto the grid during peak periods is a SMART idea and helps increase grid reliability and low ratepayer costs. Why change this? There is no good reason, except maybe that it's election season for the Governor and as favor to the fossil fuel companies.

- Businesses and residents invest in solar with net metering to provide excess electrical energy back to the grid. This helps lower the cost of energy to the public (because solar is much less expensive than fossil fuel energy) and owners of the solar systems are mildly compensated for sending excess energy back to the grid.
 - My business invested over \$140K in a solar system and the business case assumption relies heavily on net metering program staying in place in its current configuration.
 - I invested \$72K in a home solar system and my home business case assumption heavily relies on net metering staying in place.

Eliminating or reducing net metering for businesses and residents will significantly lower the ROI for the capital expenditures that have already been made, and slow down the growth of solar projects and good paying clean energy jobs in RI. If the Governor's budget change to net metering passes, it will constitute a betrayal to RI residents and businesses by the Governor, his administration, and the RI Legislature for allowing the Governor's revised budget to pass.

H7127, Article 11–Sections 7 and 8: Renewable Energy Standard

The RI Renewable Energy Standard (RES) is a CRITICAL policy that helps RI increase its use of (low cost) renewable energy and reduce reliance on increasingly expensive (think Ukraine/Iran wars) fossil fuel energy sources. Renewable energy is now the cheapest (and cleanest) form of energy, and RI is the leader in Offshore Wind, along with huge amounts of solar deployed and more planned. So why change the RES and default back to expensive fossil fuel derived energy? Why lock RI residents and businesses into higher cost fossil fuel energy? Well, it's an election year right, and

cozying up to fossil fuel special interests (and their campaign donations) in is the best interests of the Governor and not RI residents and businesses.

The most inexpensive use of energy is the one you “don’t use”. Energy standards and efficiency programs are the best way to avoid using more energy (of any kind). So why stop promoting these renewable energy standards and efficiency programs? I think we know the answer, right? Fossil fuel companies and the self-serving Governor want to remove renewable energy standard and energy efficiency programs that actually help businesses and residents of RI. This is NOT what constituents want or need from their Governor or from state legislators. It is a clear and present danger to the overwhelming majority of RI businesses and residents who demand clean low-cost renewable energy and renewable energy standards that keep our current/future energy costs low and improve the environment being destroyed by fossil fuel energy.

RI businesses and residents are being crushed by the high cost of fossil fuel energy today. This energy is coming from expensive methane natural gas, and home heating oil. The cost of this energy is not going to come down (**ever**). RI wants and needs renewable (solar, wind, and battery storage) energy and we need it NOW. Solar is the lowest cost energy in the world and it’s easy to deploy. Let’s do everything we can at the state government level to help RI businesses and residents deploy more clean low-cost renewable energy.

The Governor’s budget is irresponsible and will decimate the Act on Climate. His budget is self-serving and very short-term focused. The savings he and his administration project from delaying the RES are fantasy and don’t take into account the quantitative and qualitative BENEFITS that current RES and New Metering policies and programs have over the same time period.

Please do not advance the revised Governor’s budget. Keep the RES, Act on Climate, and Net Metering policies and programs unchanged. By doing so, you will help all of RI lower our energy costs for decades to come, and secure a healthier state for all living things.

The Governor will be long out of office by the time the worst of his budget cuts to RES and Net Metering happen. Let’s stay the course with these programs and timelines. Let’s prove to the country that RI “remains” the leader in renewable energy, with low energy costs for residents and businesses, along with a cleaner state to make life happen.

Thank you,

George Voutes