

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

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

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

I 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 making solar energy less attractive. We need to increase, not obstruct solar energy in Rhode Island.

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

Why is it necessary to de-rail the entire renewable energy standard (RES)—and as an inevitable consequence also the Act on Climate—in order to pass this budget? Aren’t we defining the upcoming financial year’s budget? One year! Isn’t what we aspire to do for the decades ahead to 2050 so far out into the future and in part unpredictable that it makes little sense to use all of it to inform this next year?

One might think that the Governor is throwing out the baby with the bathwater, but it’s not that benign.

What the Governor actually is doing with his revised budget is throwing us Rhode Islanders under the bus.

His massaging the numbers does not distract from the fact that he has rolled over and declared defeat, selling us out to the Fossil Fuel Industry. Full regulatory capture of the RI Administration by special interests that are not ours! It’s hard not to be outraged.

Daniel J. McKee acts from a fundamental lack of understanding of the basic science of climate change, of the negative impact of prolonging to emit greenhouse gases at the historically highest rate, and of the necessity to reduce emissions now—not later. He also shows a lack of understanding of the global reality that renewables have become the least expensive form of energy generation, while the cost of fossil fuels continues to rise to unaffordable levels. Instead, he still puts his hope on gas and oil.

The Governor’s actions are not in the best interest of Rhode Islanders, and it is irresponsible that his plan will lock us into “natural” gas and heating oil as the most expensive and polluting energy sources for much longer, while slowing implementation of affordable alternatives down.

What may be a short term gain will come with long term cost. In addition, this ill-conceived revised budget does not even factor in the very expensive cost of future loss and damage from extreme weather. Does anyone see the contradiction: presumably “visionary” with adjusting the the RES way into the future, and myopic with not accounting for the actual high cost that will hit us on the way to 2050? One can’t have it both ways. I don’t know of a better way than to describe this method as “penny-wise smart, pound-wise foolish”.

Please do not make yourselves complicit in making our lives unnecessarily much more expensive and unhealthy, reject the Governor’s revised budget, and leave the timelines of the

RES and the Act on Climate unchanged. Please keep energy for Rhode Islanders affordable for decades to come.

Lastly, concerning the dates in the timelines for renewable energy and for reducing greenhouse gas emissions: if we miss one of these, we must stand up for it, explain the reasons to the electorate and double down our efforts to get on track as fast as we can. Changing the entire timeline instead is poor leadership. I would like to refer to the attachment for a more detailed explanation of my reasoning for this position.

Thank you very much for considering my input.



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May 5, 2026

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Attachment

Attachment

Act on Climate and Renewable Energy Standard—Don't change the goal posts!

Background

The Rhode Island Act on Climate mandates to reduce Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions by 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, by 80% below 1990 levels by 2040, and to net-zero emissions by 2050.

The reason for mandating these reductions is that we cannot go on as we currently do, because we are emitting greenhouse gases at the historically highest level. Bringing these high emissions down as fast as possible, —now!—has leverage in reducing the global temperature increase that heats up the planet, causes severe weather and, if unchecked, will destroy the future of our children and the places we love. There is urgency, because waiting any longer to bring emissions down increases the risk that our climate will irreversibly reach a state that can not sustain human life.

There is more and more talk that we should move the mandates of the The Rhode Island Act on Climate further into the future, because of an increasing potential to not reach the 2030 target.

In addition, Governor McKee is implementing budget cuts that will possibly look good to his voters—by taking charges off the utility bills that support building efficiency and renewable energy—but which otherwise are harmful and counterproductive. It is necessary to pay for programs that make buildings more energy efficient, and that support solar energy, because the investment will pay back many-fold. To make things worse, his proposed lowering of the gasoline tax will incentivize driving and increase greenhouse gas emissions, instead of bringing them down. His measures to obstruct and raise cost of solar will steal the benefits of lower cost from Rhode Islanders, and drive solar installers away from Rhode Island. And, and this will have the most impact, he is moving the dates in the renewable energy standard from 100% by 2033 to dates that are decades into the future.

His budget is a straight from the playbook of the fossil fuel industry.

Every seasoned professional project manager knows that moving the completion date of an aggressive goal into the future because the team begins to fall behind is taking the pressure off the effort, and usually the team will be as late at the moved completion date.

We must never lower, or otherwise change a greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandate. If one of the Act on Climate (or Renewable Energy Standard) mandates is missed, we must double down our efforts to get back on track as soon as possible and meet the subsequent mandates by the time the Act (or standard) require.

It's like missing a mortgage payment. There is only one solution: you pay what you have missed and get back on schedule as soon as possible, otherwise the bank will sell your house.

If we move the goal posts during the game, we will be

- Setting the wrong example / sending the wrong message for Rhode Islanders, who will be demotivated to take own action because the State is longer leading by example.
- Paying much higher electric and gas rates.

- Losing opportunities for a substantial creation of new jobs and for boosting our economy.
- Increasing pollution and asthma.
- Lowering our quality of living.
- Ultimately caving in to the fossil industry, letting them get away with polluting longer.

We actually know what to do, but we consistently don't do most of it. The solutions (solar, wind and batteries, and electrotech assets like electric vehicles, appliances and heat pumps) are available and less expensive than natural gas and other fossil fuels and assets that rely on these fuels.

Globally, 95% of new electricity generation in the last year has been from renewable sources. In the US, it has been 91%. Almost nobody installs fossil fuel generation anymore, because renewables are much less expensive.

If we go on instead without substantial change, it will be impossible to reach the 2030 mandate to reduce Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions by 45%.

The solution for Rhode Island to catch up and reach our mandate is an actual sense of urgency, and—above all else— better leadership:

- Leadership that not only recognizes that we are under an existential threat, but that also aggressively and effectively rallies and coordinates the legislature, State government and the public to take the urgent action needed to more rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. It might help to look back at how the COVID-response was lead by Governor Raimondo and her administration, how they communicated, and see what would apply to climate and environment.
- Leadership that expeditiously follows and implements the recommendations of our own studies. Despite the fact that these studies consistently recommend to get out of gas and into renewable energy, and to reform how the utility does business, we have not sufficiently implemented their recommendations over at least seven years.
- Leadership that implements Utility Reform and aligns Rhode Island Energy's business model with the Act on Climate, and with State climate policy that aggressively supports the renewables transition.
- Leadership that enables the Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council RIEC⁴
 - to move from their "menu of possibilities, i.e. the "Rhode Island 2025 Climate Action Strategy", to a state-of-the-art climate action plan,
 - to lead implementation with professional project management techniques,
 - to learn from best practices used by leading corporations that manage large projects on-time and on-budget.
- Leadership that supports the Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council RIEC⁴ with legislative policies to accelerate implementation.

Continuing what we are used to do—business as usual—, as convenient as it might be, is the most expensive option for Rhode Islanders.

Supporting data

- RI Act on Climate¹
- RI Renewable Energy Standard²
- Energy 2035 Rhode Island State Energy Plan³
- Rhode Island 4600 Working Group Report⁴
- Rhode Island Power Sector Transformation—An inter-agency report from the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers, Office of Energy Resources, and Public Utilities Commission⁵
- Preliminary report of the Future of Gas Study⁶
- Rhode Island 2025 Climate Action Strategy⁷

¹ <https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0078A.pdf>

² <https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7277A.pdf>

³ RI Division of Planning. 2015. "[Energy 2035. Rhode Island State Energy Plan.](#)" *RI Division of Planning* (Oct 5).

⁴ Raab Associates. 2017. "[Docket 4600: Stakeholder Working Group Process. Report to the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission.](#)" *Raab Associates and RI Public Utility Commission* (Apr 5).

⁵ RI. 2017. "[Rhode Island Power Sector Transformation. Phase One report to Governor Gina Raimondo.](#)" *RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers, RI Office of Energy Resources, and RI Public Utilities Commission* (Nov).

⁶ Lintmeijer, Niki, et al. 2024. "[Rhode Island Investigation into the Future of the Regulated gas Distribution Business. Technical Analysis Report Docket 22-01-NG.](#)" *Energy +Environmental Economics, Inc.* (Apr).

⁷ RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council. 2025. "[Rhode Island 2025 Climate Action Strategy.](#)" *Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council RIEC*⁴ (Dec 18).