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Governor Baker Signs Comprehensive Solar Legislation into Law

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito were joined by a bipartisan group of legislators to sign solar legislation into law to continue the expansion of the Commonwealth's solar industry and establish a long-term framework for sustainable solar development in our state. The bill, *An Act Relative to Solar Energy*, passed both legislative chambers with overwhelming support and achieves the Baker-Polito Administration's goal of reducing costs to ratepayers while strengthening the state's clean energy economy and progressing towards the greenhouse gas reduction requirements set forth under the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA).

"This legislation builds upon the continued success of the Commonwealth's solar industry and ensures a viable, sustainable and affordable solar market at a lower cost to ratepayers," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "As our administration continues its balanced approach to diversifying Massachusetts' energy portfolio, solar development will be an integral component of our state's clean energy future."

"Cities and towns across the Commonwealth continue to realize the economic and environmental benefits of solar development," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "The legislation signed into law will preserve the assistance provided to municipalities seeking to deploy solar energy, while positioning Massachusetts to

meet our state's goals under the Global Warming Solutions Act."

"This legislation recognizes the maturity of Massachusetts' vibrant solar industry, and will facilitate long-term growth beyond 1,600 megawatts at a reduced cost to ratepayers," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.**

"The increase of net-metering cap space for public and private entities, and the lower cost next generation incentive program, will simultaneously allow for further solar development and investment in other renewable technologies in the Commonwealth."

Consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's energy agenda, the legislation provides immediate relief to the solar industry by raising the public and private net metering caps from 5% of utilities' peak load to 8% and from 4% of utilities' peak load to 7%, respectively. Additionally, the bill allows the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to gradually transition the solar industry to a more self-sustaining model. This approach includes robust stakeholder outreach, and will establish the next generation solar incentive program at a reduced cost.

"This legislation is an important step forward in the Commonwealth's clean energy future," **said Brian S. Dempsey (D-Haverhill), Chair House Committee on Ways and Means and lead House conferee of the Solar Conference Committee.** "It represents a balanced approach that will not only allow solar energy to remain a key piece of the state's energy portfolio, but it will also reduce costs borne by ratepayers by 40%. The compromises reached in this bill recognize the important role that the development of solar energy plays in contributing to the clean energy goals of the commonwealth as well as fostering green jobs and community development while ensuring that incentives are more closely aligned with costs to achieve affordability and sustainability."

"Solar is a key piece of our strategy to combat climate change and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels," **said State Senator Benjamin Downing (D - Pittsfield).** "I appreciate the Governor's quick action in signing this into law to ensure continued solar development."

"Our climate is changing and we must work towards an energy future that reduces our reliance on fossil fuels while promoting the use of clean energy alternatives," **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst).** "I am pleased we have found a path forward which ensures we will remain a leader in green energy and continue building a sustainable future for our Commonwealth."

"This bill advances our efforts to strike a balanced approach that will serve our state's

environmental and economic needs both now and far into the future,” **said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. “I thank my colleagues in the Legislature for their hard work and foresight, and look forward to the House’s energy bill later in the session.”

“Today’s bill signing marks an important milestone in the Commonwealth’s ongoing efforts to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and promote the expanded use of alternative clean energy sources,” **said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading)**. “The provisions contained in this bill will result in important economic and environmental benefits for the Commonwealth.”

“I am very pleased with the passage of this legislation,” **said Representative Thomas A. Golden, Jr. (D-Lowell), House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy**. “This bill strikes a true balance between keeping our thriving solar industry moving forward while remaining cognizant of our ratepayers.”

In an effort to lower the cost of net metering for non-participant ratepayers, the bipartisan legislation sets the new credit value for all solar projects, except residential, small commercial, municipal and government-owned, to 60% of the full retail rate. To facilitate continued solar growth within communities around the Commonwealth, the bill preserves retail rate credits for municipal and government-owned projects and continues to exempt residential and small commercial projects from the net metering cap and any net metering credit reductions.

“With the passage of this legislation, the Commonwealth is furthering its commitment to renewable energy,” **said DOER Commissioner Judith Judson**. “This legislation provides DOER with a path towards our next incentive program which will create a long-term, cost effective, sustainable framework.”

Recognizing that a long-term sustainable solution will take time to develop and that many projects are in advanced stages of development, DOER recently filed an [emergency regulation](#) which will address market uncertainty and establish a smooth transition from SREC II to the next incentive program.

“Solar energy generation is a critical component of our overall energy portfolio,” **said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R – Gloucester)**. “This bill reflects a careful attempt to provide sufficient incentives to move solar energy production forward while controlling them to prevent ratepayers from shouldering too great a cost burden for this worthwhile policy goal.”

“Most importantly, this legislation will continue to deploy solar throughout our

state,” said **Senate President Pro Tempore Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton)**, chair of **the Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change** and member of the **Solar Conference Committee**. “In order to fulfill the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act, the state needs a diverse, clean energy mix. Although we must do more to ensure a healthy energy policy for our state, this solar legislation is an imperative step in the right direction.”

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