

Joe Blotnick
Bernard
LD 1270

Testimony of Joe Blotnick in Support of ...

LD 1270: An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources

Representative Runte, Senator Bennett, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee.

I am Joe Blotnick, RESIDENT of BERNARD, ME. Thank you for the work that you do for the state of Maine and for providing me with this opportunity to support LD 1270.

The role of energy in our lives has become increasingly important to Maine's well-being, both in terms of keeping our higher and higher tech economy going and reducing/delaying what will be the disastrous effects of climate change from the burning of fossil fuels. Effects that are worsening quickly as I watched a house wash into Bass Harbor in 2024's storms and Seawall Road wiped out and left closed for months. Do not think for a minute that our heavily forested, great state of Maine will escape massive out of control fires someday like we've seen in Canada, the Northwest and L.A. if we as a nation and the world continue down the path of burning fossil fuels.

This bill would create a cabinet level Department of Energy Resources (DOER) devoted to a future energy policy where renewable energy remains a top priority for Maine. It would encourage research and development of renewable energy technologies that work for Mainers while creating Maine jobs and provide funding for increased distributed solar and energy storage capabilities around the state.

And, it would ensure that Maine does its part to help prevent climate change by funding increased distributed solar and energy storage capabilities around the state. It would lead efforts to build resiliency and preparedness so that residents and businesses will have access to electricity in times of emergency. This is critically needed now at a time where the federal government is backing away from FEMA and renewable energy.

State energy policy is under so many threats today from divisive partisan politics and the influence of larger and larger profit-driven companies including our own foreign-owned utilities. This is why we need a centralized government department that can seek to maintain its integrity through shifting political winds and the proliferation of false information.

I think it would help weather the current storm we are in over Net Energy Billing (NEB). Renewable energy, particularly solar has grown so much in Maine thanks to incentives like NEB that Governor Mills put in place after the era of LePage. My family benefitted personally from those incentives as we invested in 8.4 KW of rooftop solar energy in 2017. The system is paid off completely by now and last year, my electric bill was next to nothing since the energy I sold to Versant covered our electricity, hot water, heat (thanks to heat pumps) and 8,000 miles on our electric car. These savings are what helped my wife and I to retire in dignity. As part of A Climate to Thrive, I also helped my town of Tremont and the MDI High School go 100% solar for electricity. This is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars over the life of the panels - all thanks to NEB!

It is appalling that this committee has to fight off efforts to allow utilities to break legal contracts with customers who have invested dearly in solar, based on NEB and let Maine go against the direction of our own Climate Council and your committee's annual report on the NEB program's cost and the benefits of distributed generation.

I think a unified DOER would weather these threats better. In the words of our President, we have an energy emergency. So let's do everything we can to make sure the Maine will generate clean, responsible based solar power and wind - the cheapest type of electrical energy today.

Please support LD 1270 and a new Department of Energy Resources. Thank you.

Joe Blotnick
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