



**Testimony Neither for Nor Against Sponsor's Amendment to LD 2174, with new title
"An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy
Development"**

February 25, 2026

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Committee Members:

My name is Seth Berry, I live in Bowdoinham, and I am the Executive Director of Our Power. Our Power is a small Maine nonprofit that advocates for affordable, reliable, locally-controlled power.

Put simply, the sponsor's amendment would streamline permitting and eliminate home rule for most renewables projects, as well as high-impact transmission. This would both help and hurt Our Power's threefold mission. While it would increase energy affordability and reliability across New England, it would make local control disappear.

Local control is important to most Mainers. Local benefits -- often argued by developers to win local approval -- should matter to all of us. If passed as written, I expect that the amendment now before you would lead to a backlash, some hard feelings, and a policy reversal. However, Our Power may be able to support a different version of the bill -- one which requires robust, local benefits. Such a policy could be both durable and beneficial.

Even with home rule, big energy projects are possible here in Maine. Take it away, and you eliminate the one tool Maine communities have to stand up for their own interests in the face of development pressure by large, well-financed, non-Maine interests.

Last Sunday, you doubtless read the attached op-ed by Dr. Richard Silkman, Maine's preeminent energy economist. Dr. Silkman warns that southern New England has an extreme thirst for clean energy, and that this thirst will grow exponentially in coming years. To slake this thirst, our neighbors to the south are looking to host massive new quantities of generation and transmission infrastructure. Once advertised as "Vacationland," Maine is now being seen as "Generationland." Silkman's warning: Maine has a choice to make. We can throw open the door -- doubtless risking a backlash -- or we can enact thoughtful policies that benefit both developers and rural Maine.

Our history offers guidance. This spring -- yes, spring will come eventually -- take your canoe and paddle to certain corners of Flagstaff Lake. There, when the water is clear, you may see beneath your canoe some of the ruins of three "ghost villages." These Maine

villages were drowned under the waters of an artificial lake formed by a CMP hydro facility in the 1940s.

The longtime residents of these three villages along the Dead River had no choice. Their farms, their cleared soil, were lost forever. They were compensated at what the courts required, or what they could negotiate with CMP. But even with home rule, these three villages were erased forever. CMP dammed the river, the villages were lost, and downstream paper mills gained a new source of cheaper power. There were winners as well as losers, but it was wealthy investors who won the most, and rural farmers who lost the most.

More recently, the NECEC or “CMP Corridor” came online. Predictably, its benefits are being touted by those who supported it. But what do these supporters fail to mention? Massachusetts chose the NECEC from among dozens of competing bids, at a time when most Mainers were unaware. Meanwhile, a competing proposal in Vermont¹ offered three times the benefit to local communities, and was fully permitted at the state and local level. Predictably, Massachusetts selected the lowest bid, not the bid that created a win-win. Predictably, this caused a backlash. In the end it cost Massachusetts \$500 million more to pay for CMP’s political expenditures, litigation costs (against Maine voters), and delays. Had Maine’s leaders simply asked for a better deal, we would have had one.

What developers crave is predictability. This bill provides it. What it does not do is provide commensurate benefits to rural Maine, to offset the loss of local leverage. It should do so.

By adding robust community benefits, the bill can become a worthy compromise, and even potentially a win-win.

In energy policy circles, there is increasing interest in community benefits. For example, a recent report² from the Northeast Grid Planning Forum outlines how shared ownership and other community benefits can build trust and support to help build transmission where it's needed. The same principles can easily apply to generation projects. Our Power was pleased to contribute to this work. Notably, the report emphasizes *shared ownership* as an especially promising pathway for equity and public accountability.

In sum: Our Power recommends that at a minimum, any bill reducing home rule should robustly compensate local communities and residents for loss, and for the privilege of profiting from our land and waters. Should you decide to proceed with this bill, we would be pleased to assist in considering potential amendments that benefit Maine people, and offer a win-win rather than a win-lose proposition.

¹ <https://necplink.com/>

² <https://acadiacenter.org/resource/community-powered-progress-a-pathway-to-greater-community-participation-in-transmission-infrastructure-projects/>

Maine can and should help the New England region to tackle the crisis in energy affordability, as well as the climate crisis. But we should not do so – as we have before – with little direct benefit to Maine.

Developers will rise to the standards you require of them, so long as there is adequate demand and adequate clarity of process and minimum standards. Requiring robust community benefits could allow competitive bids in our regional energy markets to become a race to the top -- not to the bottom -- where every proposed project rises to the same standard and where no developer is tempted to cut corners at the expense of powerless local residents, merely to offer the lowest bid.

With improved language, this bill could create a rising tide that lifts all boats. As written, it should not pass.

I'm happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

Maine must not go from Vacationland to Generationland | Opinion

centralmaine.com/2026/02/15/maine-must-not-go-from-vacationland-to-generationland-opinion

February 15, 2026



Richard Silkman, Ph.D., is the former CEO of Competitive Energy, a consulting firm in Portland.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, railroad companies marketed the natural beauty of Maine's coast, lakes and forests to the wealthy of Boston, New York and Philadelphia as a place to escape the congestion and general miasma of their cities — and, not incidentally, to promote traffic on their rail lines.

This was so successful that by 1936, Maine adopted the nickname Vacationland and affixed it to our license plates and signs welcoming people into our state, and after World War II, developed the Maine Turnpike from Kittery to Portland and then eight years later to Augusta as people shifted from rail to cars.

Mainers have received value in this exchange — direct and indirect employment, tax revenues and support for many small businesses. But make no mistake about it, it has been an exchange. Mainers have lost access to the vast majority of the state's natural beauty,

privatized to the benefit of those to our south.

For the most part, land privatizations associated with Vacationland, while they have cream skimmed the best that Maine has to offer, have represented a small percentage of Maine's actual land, and have, with a few notable exceptions, not done much to change Maine's physical landscape.

This is about to change, as the other New England states will be forced to look to Maine if they are to decarbonize their economies without turning to nuclear energy. (Don't think that nuclear is the savior — 40 of the small modular reactors being discussed now will only meet 35% of New England's future electricity loads, assuming these SMRs can get sited and built.)

The electricity generation numbers are staggering, and because they are based on physics and not politics, they do not lie. Assuming that every single building in New England that is suitable for solar (over 4 million units) installs the maximum amount of solar generation on its roof, New England will still require roughly 2,000 on-shore wind turbines, 900 off-shore fixed wind turbines off Cape Cod, 1,500 off-shore floating wind turbines in the Gulf of Maine and 2,000 utility-scale solar developments comparable to the largest one in New England, now in Farmington.

While the Cape Cod wind and certainly some of the solar projects will take place in Southern New England, the vast majority of the wind and solar will be sited in Maine — because that is where the lands and the winds are. Everyone knows this.

For New England to become carbon-free, either it must become "Nuclearland" or Maine must become "Generationland." Having been involved in the Seabrook protests, the DOE's efforts to consider a high-level nuclear waste repository in Maine and the closings of Vermont and Maine Yankee and the Pilgrim Nuclear plant, my money is on the latter.

In fact, this process has already begun. The governor of Connecticut has [encouraged its utilities](#) to look to Maine for solar projects to reduce fossil fuel dependence, signaling to solar developers that it and the other New England states will look to Maine to meet their needs.

At the same time, the regional grid operator (ISO-NE) is [looking to develop massive transmission lines](#) the length of Maine to bring that energy to Massachusetts. The key question is what does Maine get out of this?

Will Maine be able to secure the kinds of benefits that the people of Quebec and Norway, for example, have been able to realize through sovereign control over their unique energy resources ? Or the benefits the people of Texas, Alaska and Wyoming have captured for their citizens from their energy resources? Or will we follow the Vacationland path and receive incidental and indirect economic benefits while our unique energy resources are privatized by developers for sale to the Southern New England states?

Billions of dollars of value are at stake over the next 30-50 years, billions that can be used to lower electric rates for Mainers and help Maine achieve its climate goals. As things currently stand, we are heading down the Vacationland path, at worst purposefully, at best unconsciously.

Recently, the Maine Public Utilities Commission [issued a request for proposals](#) seeking private developers interested in building wind farms in Aroostook County, a provision of which is that the PUC would share all bids with the other New England states. The PUC then added the following remarkable comment in bold: “Developers must offer the same bid with identical commercial terms and prices in order to be considered by any coordinating state or entity.”

This is regulatory malpractice. Maine has made it a de facto condition of any bids it receives that the same pricing has to be offered to the other New England states. No other sovereign entity would ever impose similar conditions — not Quebec, not Norway and certainly not Wyoming, Alaska and Texas.

In fact, not even the other New England states have made such an offer to Maine. Massachusetts never offered Maine a percentage of its deal with HQ and NECEC, nor has Maine ever been offered the chance to participate in the offshore wind projects operating and under construction off Cape Cod. Such offers would be unthinkable in those states.

Instead, Maine should be laser focused on how the significant economic value embedded in our energy resources can be realized by Maine citizens. Maine’s renewable resources represent the cheapest available options in the region; they should be used first by Maine to meet its significant and long-term decarbonization commitments.

There is no evidence that I am aware of that suggests there will be cheaper renewable energy alternatives in the future. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason to offer our best renewable resources today to Massachusetts and Connecticut, thus condemning Mainers to pay substantially more to decarbonize at a later date.

When the path to decarbonization of wealthy economies like Massachusetts and Connecticut lies through Maine, it is incumbent on Maine officials to put in place the legal and regulatory policies and structures to maximize the value of these resources for its citizens — not to give away those resources at the costs incurred in their development.

There are ways to do this. A Maine Generation Authority is the best approach. Others include host state or community benefit payments, development/ownership of the port facility on Sears Island and energy severance taxes.

Until such policies and structures are in place, no energy procurements should be undertaken in Maine. A good first step would be for the PUC to rescind its Aroostook Wind RFP, which will give away the best and least expensive source of renewable energy in New

England today.

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