



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Kelt Wilska, Energy Justice Manager, Maine Conservation Voters
Before the State and Local Government Committee

In Opposition to LD 894

*An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a
Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor*

March 16, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee. My name is Kelt Wilska and I am the Energy Justice Manager at Maine Conservation Voters, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, democracy, and climate future.

Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, and New Hampshire. These twenty states have all passed nearly-identical laws prohibiting their respective municipalities from prohibiting energy systems and energy distributors. Proponents of LD 894 would have you believe that this reflects a surge of enthusiasm for so-called "energy freedom" – but where is the freedom in copying-and-pasting legislation that would hinder Maine's rapid and necessary progress toward our climate and clean energy goals?

Maine prides itself on being a home rule state, where municipalities set many of their own standards for policies such as energy, efficiency, and public health based on the needs and wishes of their own residents. Passing LD 894 would run contrary to this cherished feature of Maine democracy. Across Maine towns and cities, residents and local leaders are working to reduce heating bills and indoor air pollution by getting off the volatile market of dirty fossil fuels and switching to safer and more stable alternatives such as electric heat pumps. These efforts are aligned with climate and clean energy targets articulated in *Maine Won't Wait*, the State's four-year plan for climate action, and set in statute by the Maine Legislature. Equally important in our home rule state, these efforts reflect the will of the people.

Whose will does LD 894 reflect? While this bill is centered in the vocabulary of "energy freedom," it is merely a carbon copy of 20 other bills espoused by the fossil fuel industry to preserve its profits and protect the increasingly stranded assets of oil and gas resources as renewable resources become cheaper and more accessible. It aims to block communities from acting in their own best interest, and to expose Maine cities and towns to expensive lawsuits if they fail to comply with the prohibition, something many municipal budgets can scarcely accommodate.

Governor Mills has advanced the goal of 100% clean energy from 2050 to 2040. The State is ahead of schedule in meeting its target of 100,000 heat pump installations by 2025. Maine municipalities are diligently working on strategies to accelerate the clean energy transition, and their efforts are vital to meeting the State's climate and clean energy goals. Maine Conservation Voters applauds this progress, and strongly opposes LD 894. We urge you to do the same. Thank you for your time.