

# Governor Says Offshore Wind Bill Would Create Jobs

ALEX DOMINGUEZ, Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Maryland's governor appeared Wednesday before a reformulated state Senate committee that twice failed to pass an offshore wind bill, saying the proposal at the heart of his environmental agenda could create hundreds of jobs.

"This legislation is important to our jobs future, to our energy future, and it's important, therefore, to our children's future," Gov. Martin O'Malley told members of the Senate Finance Committee.

An offshore wind farm meeting specifications of the bill would create nearly 850 manufacturing and construction jobs for five years and 160 ongoing jobs, the governor said, adding it could also help make the state a hub for the offshore wind power industry.

However, Jeff Zellmer of the Maryland Retailers Association told committee members the measure would cost jobs, not create them.

The bill would limit rate increases for residential customers to \$1.50 a month and businesses to 1.5 percent. However, Zellmer said supermarkets operate on a 2 percent profit margin and electricity is the second-largest cost for grocery chains.

"We just feel this is the wrong way to go," Zellmer said, adding that supermarkets "are going to have to cut somebody."

The retail industry employs 350,000 statewide and is one of Maryland's largest employers. Supermarkets would have to either pass on costs or cut payrolls, and in some cases won't be able to pass on costs because of competition from neighboring states, Zellmer said after testifying.

The bill would require utilities to buy offshore renewable energy credits. And it would provide rate incentives for developers. There are no offshore wind farms in the United States, although several are in development.

Concerns over costs to consumers have kept the bill from getting a sixth vote and passing out of the 11-member committee for the past two years. Committee members asked the governor on Wednesday why the state should support one form of alternative energy over another when Maryland already has a renewable energy requirement for utilities.

Abigail Hopper, an energy adviser to the governor, answered that the administration felt it was appropriate for the government to help jump start an

## **Governor Says Offshore Wind Bill Would Create Jobs**

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

---

industry.

Sen. E.J. Pipkin questioned whether an offshore wind farm would help alleviate peak summertime energy demand when winds blow strongest during the winter. O'Malley responded that offshore wind would be part of the state's alternative energy mix.

Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller moved a member of the committee to another panel this year in order to get the sixth vote needed to move the measure to the full Senate, where it has enough sponsors to pass.

"It'll pass. It'll pass the committee and it'll pass the Senate. There'll be a lot of debate and there'll be amendments, but I'm confident it will pass," Miller said before the hearing.

Miller replaced Sen. C. Anthony Muse, D-Prince George's, who had opposed previous bills, with Sen. Victor R. Ramirez, D-Prince George's, who has said he would vote for the bill.

Muse said the bill did not get out of the committee in the past two sessions because of legitimate concerns including the costs to consumers and who would get jobs created by offshore wind development.

"I just wanted those questions answered," Muse said. "It is disappointing when someone says you will vote for this or you will be moved."

Whether the current bill will attract investment is not clear, Muse said, adding he was not interested in supporting a bill only to "say 'look, we got something done,' and three or four years later, it's nothing."

Miller also appeared briefly at a rally outside the State House before the hearing where dozens turned out in support of the bill.

Katy Pape, 75, of Greenbelt said she wasn't concerned about paying the extra \$1.50 a month.

"You're going to pay anyhow because more people are going to get sick," from power plant pollution if the state doesn't transition to cleaner energy, Pape said after the rally.

Dr. Cindy Parker spoke at the rally on behalf of Physicians For Social Responsibility. Parker said the group's motto is "Preventing What We Cannot Cure" and the offshore wind bill helps achieve that goal, helping protect human health and the environment from fossil-fuel fired power plant emissions.

"If the climate is allowed to change, we are not going to be able to cure that, we are not going to be able to fix that," Parker said. "The only way is to prevent it."

## **Governor Says Offshore Wind Bill Would Create Jobs**

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 04/19/2014 - 3:44am):**

<http://www.chem.info/news/2013/02/governor-says-offshore-wind-bill-would-create-jobs>