

House Energy Affordability Bill Summary [H.5175](#)

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On February 25th, the House Committee on Ways and Means released [H.5151](#), their redraft of *An Act relative to energy affordability, clean power and economic competitiveness*. This bill, which was reported favorably out of the House side of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy (TUE) in November, was that Committee's redraft of the Governor's Energy Affordability Bill, which was filed in May of 2025. H.5151 removed much of the controversial language from the TUE redraft, including making the Commonwealth's 2030 emissions goals nonbinding and reducing compliance requirements for the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

On February 26th, the House debated H.5151 until 10pm in the evening. Ultimately, they agreed to include 3 brief consolidated amendments which tweaked some existing sections and addressed some outstanding concerns. However, despite some debate, the House's final bill still includes \$1b cut to Mass Save and was ultimately passed by a vote of 128 - 27 with two Democrats joining all of the Republicans in voting against the bill. The amended bill, H.5175, that includes these amendments can be [found here](#).

What Comes Next

The bill will now head to the Senate for their consideration. It is likely that Senate Ways and Means will redraft the bill before it heads to Senate floor for full consideration and amendment. After it passes, a conference committee will be appointed to negotiate a compromise bill.

MAPC Priorities Included in the Bill

- ***Addressing Third-Party Energy Suppliers (Section 14, 23-27):***
 - o Allows communities to pass local ordinances and bylaws to ban Competitive Electrical Suppliers (CES) from executing new or renewing existing contracts with residents
 - o Bars CES companies from contracting with residents receiving low-income utility discounts
 - o Creates further disclosure, transparency, and licensing requirements for CES companies. Increases penalties for violations and allows the AGO to bring actions against companies

- ***Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (APS) (Section 9):*** Ends APS enrollment effective 1/1/28. This mirrors the Governor's bill. Established in 2009, this program offers opportunities for certain entities to receive an incentive for installing eligible alternative energy systems, which are not necessarily renewable, but contribute to the Commonwealth's clean energy goals by increasing energy efficiency and reducing the need for conventional fossil fuel-based power generation. While DOER has attempted to improve the APS by broadening eligible technologies, as of 2023, two-thirds of certificates generated through the APS come from gas combined heat and power plants.

- ***Transmission lines along state highways (Section 15):*** Allows DOT to permit the installation and maintenance of high voltage transmission lines along state highways and creates pathway for utilities to submit an application to DOT and EFSB for constructing transmission lines along state highways.

- **Addressing Municipal Net Metering (Section 42 – 51):** Allows net metering projects owned by municipalities or other governmental entities that serve on-site load to be exempt from the public net metering cap. *Increases the maximum amount of generating capacity eligible for net metering by a municipality or other governmental entity from 10 megawatts to 20 megawatts.*
- **Discount Rates (Section 23, 52, 54):** Replaces previous language around discounted low/moderate income rates with new language that clearly incorporates gas discounts, establishes cost recovery through a non-bypassable fixed charge, does not allow for re-verification of income eligibility more than once every two years, and provides additional clarifications and flexibility.

MAPC Concerns

- **Mass Save Cuts (Section 69):** Cuts \$1 billion from Mass Save’s budget from the second half of 2026–2027, prioritizing marketing and admin budgets. While the total budget of the 2025-2027 Mass Save program is \$4.5 billion, these cuts would be incorporated at the midpoint of the program, resulting in a roughly 40-50% cut for the last 18 months of the plan.

Concerns: Mass Save is a crucial program that supports heat pump installations, weatherization and more. These dollars bring down the cost of energy for everyone, and the 2025-2027 plan represents the greatest share of program funding dedicated to supporting low- and moderate-income households and renters in the history of the program. From 2019-2024, [Mass Save realized over \\$2.70 in participant and system-wide benefits for every \\$1 invested](#). The Mass Save income-eligible program which delivers energy savings to low-income households was already oversubscribed by Q4 2025, and a drastic cut will undo substantial progress to make the program more equitable and accessible and leave more of our most burdened households behind for a less than 5% reductions in bills.

- **ACP Changes (Section 6-7):** Would require that DOER return 70% of alternative compliance payments to ratepayers until July 1, 2029. After that, DOER would need to return 70% of alternative compliance payments to ratepayers in any year when funds exceed predicted levels by 2% and energy costs burden residents—which is a condition that is likely to always be met for the foreseeable future.

Concerns: ACP funds collected by DOER are used to establish new critical clean energy programs for municipalities like the Climate Leader Communities grants, as well as to support the effective administration and oversight of many of the Commonwealth’s clean energy programs. While hundreds of millions in ACP funds were received in recent years, these recent windfalls are not guaranteed to persist as ACP proceeds averaged approximately \$25 million per year between 2015 and 2020. Redirecting funds collected from the failure to meet renewable energy targets rather than using those funds to ensure those targets can be met further jeopardizes our ability to meet our statutory climate requirements cost-effectively.

Notable Amendments Added to [H.5151](#) During Debate

- **Budget Billing Consumer Protection:** Filed by Rep Vitolo, this amendment would require that gas companies inform ratepayers receiving budget billing (per Section 41) when use is

substantially greater than the preceding months, along with recommendations for gas conservation.

- ***Ensuring equity in consumer protections:*** Filed by Rep Ciccolo, this amendment strikes language that would not allow communities with municipal aggregation to ban third-party energy suppliers from serving residential customers (per Section 14).
- ***Municipal Light Plants and Emergency Mutual Aid:*** Filed by Rep Arciero, this amendment allows municipal lighting plants to provide emergency mutual aid to other utilities. A similar amendment was also filed by Leader Jones and included in the bill.
- ***Rooftop Solar Feasibility Study:*** Filed by Rep. Lewis, this amendment would create a commission to review policies related to solar energy and battery systems and study whether it is possible to require solar on new constructions.
- ***Renewable Portfolio Standard Review:*** Filed by Rep Giannino, this amendment required DOER and DEP to study the effectiveness of the Renewable Portfolio Standard and submit recommendations for improvement.
- ***Solar for Public Entities:*** Filed by Rep Rogers, this amendment allows solar and other energy projects costing \$100,000 or less to require contractors and subcontractors working to be certified by DCAMM.
- ***Strengthening the Electric Rates Task Force:*** Filed by Leader Jones, requires the task force created in Section 66 to provide short and long term recommendations to lower rates as well as to compare the Commonwealth to its neighbors.
- ***Data Center Distribution Buildout Green Energy Mandate and Tariff:*** Filed by Rep Moran, this amendment requires data centers to procure enough energy to meet their needs using no less than 80% renewable energy resources and requires electric companies to establish a tariff to protect ratepayers from increased costs driven by data centers.
- ***Public hearings during inspector general review:*** Requires the IGO to hold 4 public hearings in different locations throughout the state to improve stakeholder input to its investigation into Mass Save (per Section 67).

Additional Policies of Notes

Consumer & Rate Related Programs

- ***Bill Transparency Dashboard (Section 1):*** Requires DPU to create a real time dashboard that includes a summary explanation of each customer bill component and the corresponding utility cost recovery mechanism. The department will also include an analysis of the benefits of the clean energy, greenhouse gas reduction, energy efficiency and demand response programs and procurements and any other programs, procurements or investments funded by electric or gas utility customers.

- ***Authorization for Energy Storage Incentive (Section 11)***: Authorizes DOER to establish a statewide, ratepayer-funded storage program.
- ***Utility Audits (Section 37)***: Allows DPU to conduct management and operations audits of gas companies and distribution companies. Audits can occur no more than every 5 years.
- ***Default Budget Billing (Section 41)***: Residential gas customers will automatically be enrolled in billing that divides yearly bills equally over 12 months. Customers are able to opt out.
- ***On Bill Financing (Section 54)***: Requires electric distribution companies to develop inclusive utility investment program proposals designed to allow customers to finance the construction of energy projects through an optional tariff payable directly through their electric bill when energy savings can exceed the cost of financing.
- ***Electric Rate Task Force (Section 66)***: Creates a task force to advise on future costs of electricity in the Commonwealth. They must report by September 2027, on each cost component of residential and commercial bills.
- ***Mass Save IGO Review (Section 67)***: Requires the IGO to review the Mass Save program. The IGO will review the effectiveness of Mass Save, including program costs and the role of the program administrators. Report due July 2027.

Electric Grid & Interconnections

- ***Surplus Interconnection (Section 12, 33, 34)***: Encourages the efficient use of unused interconnection capacity (“surplus interconnection service”) through:
 - Adding "demonstrated consideration of the use of surplus interconnection service" to standards for applying EEA Site Suitability Guidance for new clean energy projects.
 - Allowing surplus interconnection service to be considered as a cost-saving alternative for a proposed new transmission or distribution project, new energy generating facility, and new large clean transmission or distribution infrastructure.
- ***Flexible basic service procurement (Section 20)***: Allows electric utilities procuring basic service electric supply to use more flexible competitive procurement practices. Rates can still only be changed for residential customers every six months.
- ***Expanded Electric Sector Modernization Plan requirements (Section 38)***: Requires utilities to include plans for load management and virtual power plants (VPPs) in their electric sector modernization plans. Future electric sector modernization plans will need to propose investments necessary to accommodate increased economic development and new housing, which were outside of the scope of the 2023 plans.

New Clean Energy

- ***Division of clean energy procurement (Section 4-5)***: Establishes this division in DOER and allows them to develop resource solicitation plans and conduct procurements approved by the

DPU and manage contracts with clean energy facilities. Resource solicitation plans must procure at least 10 GW of additional solar and 10 GW of additional offshore wind capacity by 2040.

- ***Offshore Wind Procurement (Section 13, 58, 70)***
 - o Extends the deadline from 2027 to 2029 for companies to agree to a cost-effective long-term contract.
 - o Requires DOER to establish a program to accelerate offshore wind construction that furthers the commonwealth's goal to contract for offshore wind energy generation equal to approximately 5,600 megawatts of aggregate nameplate capacity not later than June 30, 2029.

- ***Geothermal to Individual Customers (Section 18 and 54)***: Allows gas companies to sell geothermal to individual customers. Projects under 1 MW in capacity must be designed to be able to interconnect with future adjacent geothermal projects to enable thermal energy networks.

- ***Solar Smart Permitting (Section 13)***: Directs DOER to develop an automated solar permitting platform for typical residential installations. Municipalities must adopt the platform or develop an alternative that offers the same services within 18 months of passage of legislation.

- ***Portable Solar Devices (Section 19, 54)***: Defines and allows residents to install Portable Solar Devices. Exempts them from utility interconnection and net metering requirements while exempting the distribution company from liability for damages caused by using portable solar devices.

- ***Nuclear Energy (Section 55)***: Repeals the 1982 law that requires any proposed new nuclear facility to receive approval through a statewide ballot initiative. This mirrors the Governor's bill.

Other Areas of Note

- ***Just Transition (Section 54)***: Like the Governor's bill, the HWM redraft requires a just transition plan, especially for gas workers, in utilities' climate compliance plan submissions as gas companies strive to hit net zero emissions.

- ***Labor Peace Agreements (Section 54)***: Adapts language from the Governor's bill to establish requirement for labor peace agreements for projects that involve conveying ownership or possession of public land for development of clean energy projects or projects that are receiving funding from grants/loans from the state. It also adds a clearer definition of labor peace agreement.

- ***Gas System Enhancement Plans***: The bill as passed does not address GSEP spending or requirements, which was an area of contention during the negotiations on the 2024 Climate Law. While multiple amendments were filed to modify the GSEP statute (including capping the program at the original 1.5% revenue cap and eliminating the requirement for all leak-prone pipe to be remediated through GSEP), these amendments were not taken up.

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