

Environment & Energy

Massachusetts Boosts Offshore Wind, EVs With New Climate Law

By Zach Bright

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- Target to build 5.6 gigawatts of offshore wind
 - Rebates of up to \$5,000 for electric vehicles
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Massachusetts will expand offshore wind, boost energy efficiency codes, and lower transportation emissions under a sweeping climate package that Gov. Charlie Baker (R) signed Thursday.

The new law sets a target to develop 5.6 gigawatts of offshore wind target by 2027 and mandates that all vehicles sold by 2035 must be zero-emission, among other provisions. The measures would mean more progress toward fulfilling a state law that requires greenhouse gas emissions to be cut in half by 2030.

It's a win for environmentalists who sought to fulfill Massachusetts's goal of net zero-emissions by 2050. It builds on climate legislation Baker signed last year that updated emissions goals and previously authorized 4 gigawatts of offshore wind power by 2027.

"Decarbonizing the Commonwealth will make our grid more reliable, our homes more comfortable, our transportation cleaner, and our communities stronger," said Jess Nahigian, state political director for Sierra Club Massachusetts.

"With this bill becoming law, leaders in Massachusetts of all political stripes are showing that states can take meaningful climate action," said Ben Hellerstein, state director for Environment Massachusetts.

EV, Solar

Other notable planks from the package include rebates of up to \$5,000 for electric vehicle purchases, incentives for mid-size solar projects, reforms to the state's renewable portfolio standard, and building electrification. A grid modernization advisory council will also be created to clean up the grid.

Democratic state Sen. Mike Barrett and Rep. Jeff Roy, who chaired the conference committees finalizing the bill's language, said the legislation is Massachusetts' response to President Joe Biden's call for climate change action that came during a visit to in Somerset, Mass., earlier in July.

Some environmental advocates have indicated that they plan to revisit the matter in the state's next session.

"There's a lot of room for improvement when it comes to environmental justice," said Caitlin Peale Sloan, vice president of Conservation Law Foundation Massachusetts. Protections from air pollution and access to electrified commuter rail are important to an equitable fossil fuel phase-out, she added.

The new climate legislation comes after similarly significant policy passed in April in Maryland. Like in Massachusetts, Maryland's deeply Democratic state legislature passed the bill, which Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) then signed.

Maryland's Climate Solutions Now Act set a statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of net-zero by 2045, codified a definition for environmental justice communities, and increased the state's energy efficiency goals.

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