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2018 Mass. Legislative Energy Achievements - by Susan Bernstein

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While some of us were enjoying the steamy days of summer, the Massachusetts Legislature finished its session at the end of July. As the deliberations wound down, the Legislature sent a new FY 2019 budget to the governor's desk and enacted into law new measures to increase the state's efforts to promote green energy.

Of importance were the following: extending the Massachusetts Brownfields and Historic Tax Credits for another five years (providing incentives to cleanup and reuse properties); extending the Community Investment Tax Credit to 2025, with gradual increases; an increase by 2% per year in the amount of renewable portfolio standards (RPS) required for clean power utilities; establishment of an energy storage target of 1,000 MWh by 2025; an increase in offshore wind opportunities; improvements in energy efficiency programs; and helping municipalities prepare for extreme weather events. These improvements were imbedded in An Act to Advance Clean Energy, the Housing Bond bill, and the \$2.4 billion Environmental Bond Bill. However, there was no increase in the cap on solar net metering nor approval of a statewide ban on certain plastic items (e.g. shopping bags).

Perhaps one of the highlights of the legislative session was the awarding of a long term contract to Vineyard Wind, as part of the Energy Diversity Act, intended to meet the goals of the Massachusetts Global Warming Solution Act, both passed in earlier legislative sessions, to require private utilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by developing energy sources such as off-shore wind power. Vineyard Wind was awarded the contract last spring and will be able to offer prices drastically reduced (as much as 50%) from those proposed by the now defunct Cape Wind in 2010, a byproduct of a more sophisticated industry with the ability to locate turbines in deeper waters further from the shore.

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