

Maine State Legislature
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Legislature Reconvenes, Creates Select Committee on Energy

For Immediate Release: January 7, 2009

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The members of the Maine Senate and House of Representatives returned to Augusta Wednesday for the first full day of the 124th Legislative Session. The major piece of business before the Legislature was the passage of a Joint Order to create the Joint Select Committee on Maine's Energy Future.

President of the Senate Elizabeth Mitchell and Speaker of the House Hannah Pingree, called for the creation of the bipartisan legislative committee comprised of five Senators and twelve Representatives. The committee will work to develop a long term, comprehensive energy plan that moves Maine towards energy sustainability.

President Mitchell said, "Our current energy situation is untenable. Too many homes and businesses are powered in a way that is costly, inefficient and hazardous to the environment. Maine must capitalize on our natural and human resources to create a sustainable energy future. By harnessing Maine's unique resources we can lower prices, reduce consumption and spur economic development."

"Maine is a heavily energy dependent state and we rely too much on other regions of the country and the world to provide that energy to us," said Speaker Pingree. "Maine needs a comprehensive energy plan which will harness our abundant natural resources and provide a sustainable economic and energy future here."

The Joint Select Committee on Energy will consider legislation to achieve energy sustainability, reduce consumption through energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and promote economic development through renewable energy resources in Maine. In addition, the Committee will report out recommendations regarding the levels and sources of funding necessary for large scale weatherization, energy assistance, development of renewable energy sources, and energy based work-force development programs.

"Maine is uniquely positioned to integrate all aspects of the sustainable energy economy," said Senate Majority Leader Phil Bartlett. "We can research best practices in our excellent public university and community college system, develop the technology,

and build the infrastructure here in Maine. By taking advantage of our abundant resources, Mainers will reap enormous benefits.”

“The creation of this committee is about the big picture,” said House Majority Leader John Piotti. “The energy challenges we face are enormous, mainly because we have gone too long without a comprehensive energy policy to tackle the issue on a large scale. This committee will allow us to create a new plan for both conservation and the use of our home grown sustainable energy.”

Appointments to the Joint Committee are expected to be announced next week. President Mitchell will appoint the three Senate Democrats and two Senate Republican members; Speaker Pingree will name the seven House Democrats and five House Republicans.