

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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conversion, they were 6,500 gallons of oil per year, quite a bit of it for domestic hot water. With solar, they reduced their oil consumption by over 40 percent by reducing how much their boiler was firing from spring through fall. Then there is the NEWAIM Fiber Mill in Waldoboro. They use a lot of hot water to process the wool at their small facility. They were so pleased with their solar hot water system in 2009 that they added a solar electric PV panel in 2012. Folks, these people are not just the beneficiaries of a program or a policy. They are investors in our Maine economy. Instead of continuing to send energy dollars out of the state for oil or natural gas fired power plants, they are helping employ good Maine workers in good paying jobs, which will not be exported. They are helping reduce air and climate pollution. They are helping mitigate costs that ratepayers would otherwise bear because, make no mistake, the cost of expanded transmission and distribution lines in this state is a growing portion of your electricity bill and my electricity bill. Some in this chamber might be tempted to vote against this bill thinking that it will save ratepayers \$0.60 per year. But, in reality, a vote against solar is probably a vote for higher electric costs as we continue to put our money into costly peak power and more electricity grid build out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freedom, Representative Jones.

Representative JONES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. I'd like to call to the body's attention to our actions of June 7, 2013, in which, by a vote of 121-11, we approved LD 1559 which authorized up to \$75 million annually to purchase natural gas, pipeline capacity, in Massachusetts, to be paid for through the rate paying structure. This bill before us today is a small and, quite frankly, very modest attempt to level the playing field between an individual's ability to choose an appropriate model for the generation of electricity in his or her home based on their usage and their own perception of their ethical obligations to deal with climate change. Regardless of the anecdote that you may have heard about the multimillion dollar vacation home and pick your neighborhood on the coast, this subsidy would provide needed capital for low-income, working poor, middle class people, such that they could make long-term fiscal decisions, such that, you know what, one day they may not have a power bill far beyond the transmission cost to be connected to the grid. When we talk about energy independence, this could be energy independence for our citizens with a little bit of capital startup money, and isn't that what we all talk about, our barriers to business, our barriers to capital? We're all talking about bringing capital for new projects. This would provide access to capital for normal human beings to gradually wean themselves from our fossil fuel dependent grid and provide a more sustainable economic structure for their own home energy needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Augusta, Representative Wilson.

Representative WILSON: Mr. Speaker, may I pose a question through the Chair?

The SPEAKER: The Representative may pose his question.

Representative WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've asked the question a few times to various people and I've been lobbied quite heavily on this bill, so kudos to those who have been working hard. My question is for the average solar panel project, for a homeowner – I'm less concerned with the commercial side of things – how much will the rebate be and what formula will be used to determine it? I've read the bill and I don't see that. I've read the amendment and I don't see that. So I want to know what is the rebate for an average person, like

myself, that maybe will have a \$20,000 project under this proposal?

The SPEAKER: The Representative from Augusta, Representative Wilson, has posed a question through the Chair to anyone who may care to respond. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Gideon.

Representative GIDEON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Representative from Augusta, the average rebate would be about \$2,000.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Embden, Representative Dunphy.

Representative DUNPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm a huge proponent of solar energy. I've got a couple of solar collectors on my garage and paid for it myself. It's kind of a unique concept that appears in here, but that's nonetheless what I did. So if the solar industry is exploding, as our good chair indicated, why do we need to jumpstart it? We've been jumpstarting it for seven years. We're looking at going from \$450,000 to \$1 million in subsidies. If my car is running, I don't hook it up to a booster cable. It doesn't make any sense to me. I heard that solar prices are dropping rapidly. That's great news. That's great. I paid twice what I should have for mine. But again, why should my constituents in Rockwood, Jackman, Athens, Cornville, wherever, North Anson, New Portland, who are making \$8 or \$10 an hour, pay \$2,000 for somebody to put a solar collector on their home and reap those benefits? So the T and D, the transmission and distribution of this energy, we are localizing it and that's a great idea as well, but who's going to pay for the T and D charges? They continue. There is no stopping them. Central Maine Power or Emera has to provide power to that home, if they're connected. Someone has to pay for those lines and meter readings and the whole nine yards, so there is a hidden cost that apparently no one is talking about here.

Climate change, where are most of these panels made? You know, if you look at it globally, if you sort of pick a 30,000 foot approach at this, most of this stuff is made in China or I think there is some made in Europe, but most of its made in China. So what are their concerns with their mining? There is a lot of precious metals or odd metals in these collectors. Who keeps an eye on their mining? What about shipping it here? What about transporting all of this stuff all around the country? So if you're looking at it globally from climate change, that seems like a stretch to me. So anyway, low-income, working-class, I'm on board with that, so let's put a cap on this bill. Let's put an income cap. If you make more than \$40,000 a year, or pick a number, you don't qualify for these rebates. I'd buy into it 100 percent if we do that, but as it stands right now, I just can't see burdening and I'm sure it's more than \$0.05 a month, but I just can't see burdening my constituents, the working. I mean, we all have working-class constituents, but the working-class people in my district, who absolutely can't afford to put this on their small home or their mobile home, they just can't do it no matter what kind of a rebate we give them. So if you want to take it away from the higher income, I'm on board with that. Let's make it affordable for the very low-income and the revision I heard mentioned, it got great ads. I've seen million dollar homes with \$10 million views putting solar energy on and they want me to subsidize that? It just doesn't make any sense to me. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Portland, Representative Russell.

Representative RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. Forgive me, I am losing my voice. If I start sneezing, I apologize in advance. If I start coughing, I apologize in advance. It is winter for a few