

Beat: News

Black Liquor Bill just shy of Passing Md. House Economic Matters Committee

11-8 vote could cost ratepayers millions

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USPA NEWS - Legislation before the Maryland General Assembly to close a massive loophole in the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (PRS) law was defeated 11-to-8 in the House Economic Matters Committee Friday after passing the state Senate on Thursday by a vote of 33-13 and garnering bi-partisan support.

The proposed legislation sponsored by Senator Rob Garagiola (D-15-Frederick County) in the Senate and Delegate John Olszewski (D-6- County) in the House of Delegates to roll back payments to paper companies burning a pulping residue known as "black liquor" will have to wait another year to be re-considered, at the expense of Maryland's consumers, ratepayers, environment, and jobs.

Senate Bill 684 and House Bill 1102 aimed to close a massive loophole in the law which shoveled millions of Maryland ratepayer dollars to old, out-of-state paper mills for burning "black liquor," a carbon-intensive waste byproduct.

If passed, this law would have removed out-of-state black liquor, a dirty waste byproduct of paper mills, from Tier One, the top level, of the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Doing so would help bring as much as 30 percent more renewable energy like wind power to Maryland over the next decade and reduce climate pollution by the equivalent of taking 275,000 cars off the road each year. The bill would also protect and create Maryland jobs, guaranteeing that the only major Maryland mill, Luke Mill, would retain its subsidy for as long as the 125-year-old facility continues to operate.

Tom Carlson, Maryland Campaign Director for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, said "We applaud the Senate, whose overwhelming endorsement of the bill exemplifies what a win-win this is for Marylanders. A few delegates sided with lobbyists for out-of-state companies and against the best interests of Marylanders by failing to advance this bill. If the black liquor loophole remains in state law, Marylanders could end up shoveling over \$20 million more this year to out-of-state mills for energy that's harming our health and climate. That's money that should be generating new clean energy and well-paid jobs in Maryland. We'll keep fighting to end this rip-off for Maryland's consumers, environment and jobs."

Chris Hill, Conservation Representative for the Maryland Sierra Club, responded by saying, "This is hugely disappointing for Marylanders who expect our clean energy policy to mean more wind and solar powering our homes and businesses. This common-sense bill would increase the amount of renewable energy in the state by up to 30% without impacting electricity rates at all. By allowing this critical bill to die, the House Economic Matters Committee has failed to take what would have been a pivotal action to protect our families from more climate disasters and helping bring more job-creating clean energy to the state."

According to most environmental insiders, the legislation had the broad support of Maryland's environmental and green business community, but was fought fiercely by out-of-state paper industry lobbyists and Dominion Virginia Power.

"This will be one, if not the top environmental issue in Annapolis next year "" guaranteed," said Carlson.

Details of the full Senate vote, and the House Environmental Matters Committee vote are below:

Senate Vote and House Economic Matters Committee Vote

To see how individuals Senators voted on this bill, please utilize the web address below (NOT A LINK for security reasons):

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=flrvotepage&tab=subject3&id=SB0684,s-0803&stab=02&ys=2013rs>

Below is a detailed listing of the Delegates and their vote in the House Economic Matters Committee:

FINAL VOTE was 11-to-8 AGAINST the Bill

VOTING YES:

Olszewski

Hucker

Barnes

Kramer

Haddaway

Schuh

Impallaria

Hershey

Feldman

Love

Jameson

VOTING NO:

Rudolph

Barkley

Braveboy

Clagett

McHale

Schulz

Vaughn

Miller

DIDN'T VOTE:

Davis

NOT PRESENT TO VOTE:

Burns

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-732/black-liquor-bill-just-shy-of-passing-md-house-economic-matters-committee.html>

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