



Industrial Wind Action Group

facts, analysis, exposure of wind energy's real impacts

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MARKEY “COMPROMISE” ON ENERGY BILL GIVES WIND INDUSTRY FREE PASS

***Industrial Wind Action Group says amendment offers no protections for wildlife;
Provides no guidance or oversight for federal regulators***

NEW HAMPSHIRE (June 15, 2007). Industrial Wind Action (IWA) Group responded today to legislative maneuverings by Congressman Markey (D-MA) that replaced provisions in the Rahall Energy Bill (H.R. 2337) pertaining to wind power – in Subtitle D.

According to Lisa Linowes, Executive Director for IWA, the draft wording¹ proposed by Congressman Rahall would have established uniform standards for wind energy development to protect our wildlife heritage. IWA praised Congressman Rahall (D-WV) for all his hard work in recognizing and trying to prevent adverse environmental impacts of utility-scale wind power.

But Rahall's efforts were undermined by an aggressive campaign launched by the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), Sierra Club, and others. AWEA's unjustified claim that the Rahall provision would render wind energy illegal in the U.S. provoked a media frenzy and vicious public attacks on Rahall. “Most disappointing,” Linowes said, “was the willingness of Representatives Markey (D-MA) and DeFazio (D-OR) to parrot the wind industry's alarmist assertions about the Rahall bill.” She added that by voting to accept the Markey amendment, the House Natural Resource Committee members turned a blind eye to the expert testimony presented at the May 1 oversight hearing that detailed the current and growing cumulative impacts of wind turbines on bats and birds².

At this hearing, an expert for Bat Conservation International testified that the estimated kill of bats may be from 400 to 750 bats per Megawatt (MW) over the 25-year lifespan of wind turbines installed along Appalachian ridges in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Given the projected wind energy development levels for this one small portion of the US - over 2,000 MW of wind turbines installed by 2020 – as many as

¹ <http://www.windaction.org/documents/9586>

² <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/hearings/hearingdetail.aspx?NewsID=61>

800,000 to 1.6-million bats could be killed over the operating lifetime of these machines. An expert with the American Bird Conservancy estimated that, at current mortality rates, from 900,000 to 1.8-million birds per year may be killed by wind turbines if sufficient numbers of towers are erected to provide 20% of the electricity consumed by our nation. Finally, Dale Hall, director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service stated “uncertainty and gaps in knowledge have resulted in the inability of scientists to draw definitive conclusions about the threat and cumulative impacts that wind power poses to wildlife.”

IWA asserts the Committee “missed a very important opportunity to put standards in place that will better assess the impacts of the turbines before projects are sited. Ignoring the problem can lead to catastrophic environmental circumstances.” Wealthy utilities are reaping billions annually in taxpayer subsidies and other public funds. It is reasonable for large-scale wind development to be subject to federal oversight regulations aimed at ensuring safe siting.

Markey’s amendment,³ as written, accomplishes little that’s meaningful despite the Massachusetts representative’s claim that the compromise wording “would strike a balance between protecting wildlife and acting on the need for more renewable energy⁴.” IWA found Section 233 - Enforcement was so vague as to be pointless. “Simply saying that the Secretary of the Interior “shall enforce” all “relevant” laws to “address” impacts offers nothing to current law,” Linowes said, adding that the Interior Department is *already* legally bound to enforce all “relevant” laws involving wildlife and wind projects. “It is simply inaccurate to describe this amendment as a “compromise” since it accomplishes nothing for wildlife advocates and imposes no new obligations on the wind industry or on federal regulators,” Linowes said. But worse, IWA warned Markey’s wording provides a convenient pretext for the wind industry to continue to avoid and/or defer reforms.

Industrial Wind Action Group seeks to promote knowledge and raise awareness of the risks and damaging environmental impacts of industrial wind energy development. Information and analysis on the subject is available through its website, www.windaction.org. To subscribe to the IWA weekly newsletter, visit <http://www.windaction.org/subscribe>.

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³ <http://www.windaction.org/documents/10074>

⁴ <http://markey.house.gov/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2889&Itemid=125>