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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

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An Act Relative to Coal Free Commonwealth

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Legislative language forthcoming, but below is a summary of the high points of the previous bill and what it seeks to accomplish.

Bill seeks to phase-out coal-fired electric generation in Massachusetts by 2020 and promotes a just transition for host communities, including transitional support and innovative opportunities for growing a green economy.

Overview:

For the benefit of public health, the environment and the economy, this bill provides a framework for a gradual and responsible phase-out of coal-fired electric generation in Massachusetts. Coal burning power plants inflict significant harm on public health, especially among children and the elderly, causing incalculable suffering while also increasing the financial burden of health care for everyone. In addition, coal power plants are the most greenhouse-gas-intensive sources of electricity in the state. Phasing out coal is critical to protecting the Commonwealth's residents, meeting Massachusetts' nation-leading commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and opening the door to a clean energy economy.

Key Points from Proposed Bill:

The actions proposed in this bill result in a roadmap for a cost-effective transition from coal to a cleaner, less carbon-intensive energy supply that will create local jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful pollutants, provide assistance to displaced workers, and provide funding for the protection of public health.

Below are some highlights of the bill that will allow for a responsible phase out of coal-fired electric generation in Massachusetts by 2020 and to ensure a just transition to a cleaner, healthier future.

- Requires the Commissioner of the Department Of Energy Resources to adopt a plan that takes into account the potential re-use of sites for low carbon energy generation and other alternatives that do not include energy generation. The plan should also take into account public comment and should lay out an orderly roadmap for phase-out of all coal-fired plants in Massachusetts by 2020 in a way that promotes economic and public health benefits;
- Creation of a Community Repowering Fund for the purpose of mitigating any impacts of the retirement of coal-fired electric generating facilities on the employees and host communities of such facilities.
- Establishes a GHG emissions performance standard for all power sold to MA customers so that in 2020 and beyond the power must have emissions no greater than an older natural gas plant (1100 lbs/MWh GHG emissions) or the average emissions from electric generating units in ISO-NE, whichever is lower. Newly constructed facilities in MA would need to comply with this standard as of 2013;
- Proposed modification of the authority of the MA Clean Energy Center (CEC) to make more explicit that the CEC can use its funding to train workers at coal and oil-fired power plants to handle new clean energy jobs.
- Establishes a trust fund to study the health impacts from coal-fired power plants, educate the public about the impacts and study methods for mitigating these health impacts. The fund is supported by assessing a fee from power plant owners for each pound of pollutant they emit;
- Establishes a prohibition on the use of coal at any facility in the Commonwealth.