

House Finance Committee hearing for 2017 H 5197, MAY 17, 2017

An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government — Energy Siting

Testimony of Mr. Steve MacAusland representing Rhode Island Interfaith Power and Light (RI IPL).

Testimony:

Chairman Abney, Vice Chair Marshall, Vice Chair Tanzi, and members of the House Finance Committee:

I am Stephen MacAusland, lifelong member of RI IPL and member of Emmanuel Church, Newport, here to express Rhode Island IPL's (RI IPL, <http://www.ri-ipl.org>) strong support for H 5197, an Act relating to Energy Siting, which contains a key provision prohibiting the granting of a license for the energy facility if the facility would adversely affect the ability of the state to meet the carbon-emissions reduction goals set forth of in the Resilient RI Act (<http://www.resilientri.org/legislation.php>).

RI IPL is the RI chapter of the national organization, Interfaith Power and Light that has chapters in 40 US States, with more than 20,000 member churches, houses-of-worship, and religious organizations representing millions of people of faith. Our RI IPL chapter has 28 members, including the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, the RI Conference of the United Church of Christ, the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, the Brown University and RISD Hillel, and the Office of Chaplains and Religious Life of Brown University and 23 individual houses-of-worship, representing many thousands of Rhode Islanders.

RI IPL's Mission is to mount a religious response to global warming. We do this by educating faith communities about global warming and relevant moral spiritual teachings, by promoting energy efficiency and conservation, and by advocating for public policies and legislation that will minimize global warming and its impacts. As people of faith, we believe we all have a moral responsibility to protect the Earth's natural systems, and to safeguard the well-being of those most vulnerable to climate change, but least responsible for it - the poor of the world and future generations.

Your Committee is already well aware of the mountains of scientific evidence stressing the urgency and extent to which humanity must reduce greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions in order to pass on a healthy planet to our children and future generations. Being a State with a vast coastline, RI is particularly vulnerable to global-warming's induced sea-level-rise, recently predicted to be as much as 11 feet by 2100 if global GHG emissions continue at their current pace.

While minimizing GHG emissions will provide many benefits (improved security, health, economy, biodiversity), RI IPL speaks specifically to the faith-based and moral reasons that compel us to respond to the global-warming problem: justice and stewardship of Creation:

Justice:

Justice because it is the poor of the world who are already suffering and will continue to suffer the most from the impacts of global warming even though they have contributed the least to the problem. Justice because it is our youth, grandchildren and future generations that will bear the burden and suffering from our failure to act. We are enjoying the benefits of using energy gained by freely polluting the air with excess CO₂, while the poor of the world and future

generations have not similarly contributed to, benefited from, nor agreed to accept the harms and burden that our greenhouse-gas pollution is and will place upon them. This is clearly unjust and unethical.

Stewardship of Creation:

The Bible and all major Faith traditions have strong teachings commanding people to be good stewards of the Earth/Creation

2017 H 5197:

H5197 contains a key provision prohibiting the granting of a license for the energy facility if the facility would adversely affect the ability of the state to meet the carbon-emissions reduction goals set forth of in the Resilient RI Act of 2014 (<http://www.resilientri.org/legislation.php>).

As we have detailed above, RI IPL makes a very strong moral argument that we all must urgently and dramatically reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases. There is a compelling moral need for Rhode Island to reduce its emissions in compliance with the Resilient RI Act. Emphasizing RI IPL's moral perspective, we strongly support H 5197.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Steve MacAusland