

## MASSACHUSETTS RENEWABLE THERMAL COALITION



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### Landmark Legislation Promotes Massachusetts Heating and Cooling with Renewable Fuels

Advocates for renewable thermal energy are celebrating today as Massachusetts is poised to become one of a few select states in the country to sign into law comprehensive legislation to promote the use of clean, renewable fuels and technologies to heat and cool buildings. On the last day of the Massachusetts legislature's formal session of 2014, the landmark legislation was passed to be enacted by both the House and Senate, and now awaits Governor Patrick's signature.

"The passage of the renewable thermal bill will provide important financial incentives to people who choose to make the responsible choice of heating or cooling their home or business with renewable technologies such as solar heating, geothermal and air source heat pumps, and bio-fuels such as wood pellets, wood chips, renewable bio-oils, or renewable natural gas," said Charlie Niebling, public affairs consultant to New England Wood Pellet, who also chairs the Massachusetts Renewable Thermal Coalition, a group representing over 40 local businesses and regional trade associations. Lead coalition members include the Solar Energy Industries Association, the New England Geothermal Professionals Association, the Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas, the Geothermal Exchange Organization, the Massachusetts Forest Alliance, and the Biomass Thermal Energy Council.

While the bill provides for powerful new financial incentives, it does so without creating new spending. Instead, renewable heating and cooling technologies will now qualify for Alternative Energy Credits under the Commonwealth's existing Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (APS). Under the APS, retail electricity suppliers must purchase Alternative Energy Credits to off-set the energy they produce using non-renewable fuels such as heating oil, making electricity rates dependent in part on the number of available Alternative Energy Credits on the market. With more Alternative Energy Credits available from renewable heating systems, prices drop, and ultimately, so will rates for electricity.

According to Senator Barry Finegold, the bill's prime sponsor, "This bill is good for the environment, and it's good for rate payers. Enactment of the renewable thermal legislation will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand our clean energy portfolio, and bring us one step closer to realizing the goals set forth as part of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008."

"It's also good for jobs" said Jeffrey Hutchins, executive director of the Massachusetts Forest Alliance, representing woodland owners and forest industry professionals. "Advanced bio-fuel technologies such as efficient wood chip and wood pellet systems utilize a fuel that can be produced sustainably right here in Massachusetts. That means the potential for more production and manufacturing jobs, especially in rural areas of the state. There's a real economic benefit here."

Katherine Stainken of the Solar Energy Industries Association agrees. "We've seen interest in solar heating systems steadily increase in Massachusetts over the last decade, and with the new incentives and longer-term stability provided by this bill we expect to see companies that install these systems continue to expand their businesses and hire more people."

Speaking on the benefits of heat pump technology, Chris Williams of the New England Geothermal Professionals Association added, "Heat pumps are a proven technology that can both heat and cool buildings with lower emissions compared to fossil fuels. This bill will increase the investment in and adoption of heat pumps by Massachusetts property owners creating local jobs, lowering fuel costs, and emissions."

According to David Cox, who represents the Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas, "This is a win for Massachusetts and for renewables, including biogas-derived renewable natural gas. When governments signal to the market that renewables are a priority in their state, supply of clean, green alternatives to fossil fuel is certain to follow."

The bill is expected to be signed by Governor Patrick within the next ten days. Once signed, it will go into effect on January 1, 2015. The Massachusetts Renewable Thermal Coalition welcomes support and involvement from anyone interested in promoting renewable heating and cooling technologies and fuels. Those interested are encouraged to visit the website to learn more: [www.MassCleanHeatBill.org](http://www.MassCleanHeatBill.org)

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