

The New Hampshire House has four key energy related bills scheduled on the house Calendar for today, Tuesday, January 9, 2018.

Three bills appear as Special Order items, and one as a Regular Calendar matter. House Democrats on the House Science, Technology and Energy Committee, in a November press release regarding these energy bills, criticized the partisan vote in committee, and claimed the four bills "would disrupt the energy economy and harm advances in clean and efficient energy..."

According to Representative Bob Backus (D-Manchester), "The high cost of energy is a major complaint of people in this state. The best answer is to maximize energy efficiency and help people lower their usage and their electric bills. These bills would do great harm to those efforts if they become law."

Republicans on the committee maintain that HB 317, on as a Special Order item, would prohibit the public utilities commission from increasing the System Benefits Charge (SBC) without legislative approval.

Representative Michael Vose (R-Epping) argued the SBC, in existence for more than fifteen years as a modest charge (currently about \$2.21 per month) and, which operates as a subsidy for some low-income households towards their energy bills, should be imposed only by the legislature.

Democrats countered the legislature, "lacks the ability to act in a timely fashion should a need to make changes up or down quickly arise. Testimony before the committee was overwhelmingly opposed to this bill, including that of the Consumer Advocate, the Department of Environmental Services, and the PUC itself."

The other two energy bills appearing as Special Calendar items, and opposed by the Democrats ([see correction below](#)) in committee, are listed here (click on bill number for links to information on each bill):

HB 559-FN, relative to expenditures from the energy efficiency fund.

HB 592-FN, repealing the regional greenhouse gas initiative.

The fourth bill that moved ahead on a strict party-line vote, appears on the Regular Calendar as:

HB 114, an act relative to minimum electric renewable portfolio standards.

Regarding the bills that would change New Hampshire's commitment to increasing its renewable energy goals, Representative Suzanne Harvey (D-Nashua) reminded colleagues that the "legislature's efforts 10 years ago on renewable energy provided our state with hundreds of jobs in a renewable energy economy."

She also warned that undermining "those efforts hurts our state's workforce, and creates an unstable environment that discourages investment in a rapidly growing sector" and "will only discourage the young people that New Hampshire needs to attract from moving to and investing in our state."

**(Correction: The Candle incorrectly reported that House Democrats opposed HB 559. They actually supported the measure, but had complained that the House Science, Technology and Energy Committee had voted along party lines, with Republicans opposing what Democrats had argued was a good piece of legislation. -Editor, January 10, 2017.)**