
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6397

AN ACT CONCERNING ZERO-CARBON EMISSIONS.

SUMMARY

This bill states that Connecticut declares climate change a public health and environmental justice emergency for purposes of increasing access to federal funds and showing the urgency of enacting meaningful, which the bill does not define, climate legislation.

Relatedly, the bill requires Connecticut, through its governor and other statewide elected officials, to increase federal funding requests for climate emergency-related actions. Specifically, the state must seek the funds for (1) statewide affordable zero-carbon electricity generation (i.e., solar, wind, geothermal, and battery storage), (2) community climate resilience, (3) environmental justice opportunities, and (4) training for clean energy sector jobs and fossil fuel-to-clean-energy business transitions. (The bill does not specify which officials are responsible for which requests and, presumably, these requests may be delegated to executive branch agencies.)

The bill creates several requirements for the following state agencies to address the climate emergency: administrative services (DAS), economic and community development (DECD), energy and environmental protection (DEEP), the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), and the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS).

The bill states that its climate emergency declaration does not authorize the governor to operate the state through executive order. It also states that the bill serves to invoke the National Emergencies Act for the President of the United States to declare a related national emergency (see COMMENT).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The bill states that the climate emergency threatens the resilience (and the existence of some communities in the state), including aspects of the state’s environment, economy, and quality of life for the state’s younger generations. The bill also states that it is urgent to (1) greatly and quickly increase community coping capacities to handle climate extremes and climate refugees and (2) mitigate climate impacts and prepare for and manage disaster risk from climate extremes.

STATE AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

DEEP

The bill requires the DEEP commissioner to:

1. by July 1, 2025, and within available appropriations, produce a comprehensive Connecticut Decarbonization Roadmap to achieve the state’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets (by law, DEEP already reports on its GHG emissions reduction every three years, see BACKGROUND) and
2. establish a Citizens Oversight Working Group to (a) give the public oversight of the state’s adherence to its GHG emissions reduction targets, (b) ensure that the state meets the targets’ timelines and deadlines and help develop tangible actions to meet the targets, (c) meet the Connecticut Integrated Resource Plan’s goal of a fully zero-carbon electric sector by 2040, and (d) ensure Connecticut complies with all climate change executive orders (it is unclear if the working group has the authority and means to fulfill these requirements).

Under the bill, DEEP must also take unspecified actions to acquire federal funds to develop programs for local communities throughout Connecticut, including underserved communities, which the bill does not define. These required actions must mitigate impacts of climate change, fossil fuel use, waste disposal incineration, landfills, and other municipal functions that historically disproportionately effect underserved communities.

DEEP and DAS

The bill requires DEEP and DAS to help Connecticut residents and municipalities obtain federal funds to install renewable energy, zero-carbon emissions clean all-electric energy systems in all newly constructed residential and commercial buildings. These efforts must include behind-the-meter grid-adapted solar and wind systems and battery storage systems. The departments must work with energy supply companies to develop equitable cost-favorable clean energy solutions for retail end users.

DEEP and PURA

The bill requires DEEP and PURA to (1) develop strategies for energy infrastructure development that focus on renewable energy systems (e.g., battery storage) and (2) work with northeastern states and regional independent system operators to implement the strategies.

DECD

The bill requires DECD to collaborate with municipal economic development agencies in the state to secure federal funding for local businesses to access renewable energy supplies and consume less fossil fuel.

DECD and OWS

The bill requires DECD and OWS, by October 1, 2023, to (1) work with all industries in the state that are impacted by the transition away from fossil fuel use and (2) develop job retaining plans for them.

COMMENT

National Emergencies Act

The federal National Emergencies Act (NEA) (P.L. 94-412) allows presidents to issue formal declarations of a national emergency and Congress to oppose and end a declaration. The bill states that its climate emergency declaration serves to invoke the NEA, but the NEA does not give states the power to do this. Emergencies declared under the NEA are exclusively federal actions.

BACKGROUND

GHG Emissions Reduction Targets

By law, the Global Warming Solutions Act requires the state to reduce GHG emissions from all sources to a level at least (1) 10% below 1990 emission levels by January 1, 2020; (2) 45% below 2001 emission levels by January 1, 2030; and (3) 80% below 2001 emission levels by January 1, 2050. It also requires the state to reduce GHG emissions from electricity supplied to electric customers in the state to 0% by January 1, 2040. Every three years, the DEEP commissioner must report to the Environment, Energy and Technology, and Transportation committees on the quantifiable reductions achieved to meet the GHG emission reduction targets (CGS § 22a-200a).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 26 Nay 7 (03/10/2023)