

(May 22, 2007) Provision in House Defense Authorization Bill Seeks to Boost Renewable Energy Market

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Inside Green Business, May 22, 2007 — The fiscal year 2008 defense authorization bill passed by the House last week includes a provision crafted to harness the Defense Department's significant purchasing power as a way to boost the market for renewable energy generation, a significant addition to the growing number of government measures fostering the development of U.S. clean energy demand.

The amendment, attached to the bill May 16 during floor debate, would increase the percentage of DOD renewable-energy purchases from the current level of 9 percent to 25 percent by the year 2025, according to a floor statement by Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ), the sponsor of the amendment. The legislative language also calls on DOD to set annual incremental goals as the department moves toward meeting the 25 percent requirement.

"We believe that with the adoption of this amendment and of these goals, we would generate a \$15 billion market in the purchase of electricity generated by renewable fuels," Andrews said. "We further believe that the entrepreneurial capacity of American scientists and entrepreneurs would generate products that would help fill this need." These products would then be available to the commercial and public sectors, helping to reduce the U.S. dependence on nonrenewable fuels, he said.

DOD currently spends over \$3 billion annually to buy electricity, he noted.

Another amendment added to the bill during floor debate would mandate that the Pentagon use high-energy efficiency light bulbs throughout its buildings.

"When you consider that the DOD has over 240,000 buildings in the U.S. alone, it is clear that this amendment is a practical way to make significant progress in lowering energy consumption, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting energy independence, while at the same time saving millions of American taxpayer dollars," Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), the amendment's backer, said in a floor statement May 16.

Both amendment allow the defense secretary to waive the requirements if they interfere with national security interests.

While the House approved the bill by a veto-proof margin of 397-27, the Bush administration is threatening to veto the legislation if the final conference version contains certain amendments on Iran, personnel and procurement.

The bill also includes a first-time requirement to investigate the effects of climate change on national security—a measure the Bush administration say would set "a harmful precedent";

Specifically, the Bush administration opposes the bill's mandate for climate change studies as part of the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review, according to a May 16 statement of administration policy issued by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

"This section sets a harmful precedent," the statement reads. "The content of these products should not be reflected in law, particularly in a manner that impinges on the flexibility of national security professionals and policy officials to determine the most appropriate subjects for these strategy documents."

The Senate is slated to begin consideration of its defense authorization bill this week. — Suzanne Yohannan