Policy Options

OFFSHORE WIND

CLIMATE & ENERGY

Overview

In the United States, offshore wind has a technical potential of generating over 2,000 GW, or approximately twice what is generated today in the nation's entire electric grid. Offshore wind would also bring significant benefits to coastal communities and help transition away from fossil fuels. Its development is instrumental to the nation's transition to a clean energy economy. However, the United States falls behind other world leaders in offshore wind development and only has two operational offshore wind farms to date: Block Island Wind Farm and Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind.

State policymakers have introduced and passed legislation to set development targets, protect the environment, address environmental justice concerns, and establish frameworks for the responsible development of offshore wind. Now, amid the federal government's commitment to creating tens of thousands of jobs and deploying 30GW of offshore wind by 2030, state leaders can ensure these policies are in place.

Policy Considerations and Strategies

Impacts on the Marine Environment

Offshore wind development and operation has an impact on the marine environment. It is crucial to have an understanding of those impacts and ways to prevent or mitigate them.

- CT H.B.7156 (2019): requires development of best management practices to mitigate and prevent impacts on wildlife during the construction and operation stages.

Stakeholder Engagement and Environmental Justice

State lawmakers can ensure that, at every stage, ocean stakeholders and community voices are accounted for, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

- CA A.B.525 (2021): requires strategies to address impacts on Native American and Indigenous peoples, and commits to include labor representatives and environmental justice communities in the planning process.

Connecting to the Grid

All offshore wind projects need a landing point for transmission cables to connect to the grid. State lawmakers can facilitate landfall while protecting community and conservation interests.

- NJ S.3926 (2021): authorizes certain offshore wind projects to construct power lines and obtain real property interests after opportunity for public input and with special provisions for lands reserved for recreation and conservation.

Intrastate Coordination

Given the complexity of offshore wind, multiple agencies play a role at different stages of development. A specialized body within the state to coordinate is crucial to ensure efficacy in the permitting process and beyond.

- VA H.B. 234 (2020): establishes the Division of Offshore Wind to coordinate state agencies on offshore wind, including workforce development and stakeholder engagement.

Gigawatt Production Goals

By establishing concrete targets, state legislatures can monitor the states' progress and introduce supporting legislation to meet goals.

- OR H.B.3375 (2021): sets target to develop three gigawatts of floating offshore wind power by 2030.

Jobs

State lawmakers can require developers' commitment to workforce development as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- ME L.D. 336 (2021): requires negotiation of long-term power contracts to support Maine's floating offshore wind research array in federal waters.

Useful Resources

- Climate Jobs NY works with union members and the public to support offshore wind.
- Conservation Law Foundation on how Offshore Wind and Right Whales Can Coexist.
- Model for Marine Spatial Planning: Rhode Island's Ocean Special Area Management Plan (SAMP).
- Polling Data Report showing voters' bipartisan support for offshore wind development.

Visit ncelenviro.org to see more recently introduced/enacted offshore wind bills.