



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of The Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013, HB 226

As Unitarian Universalists, we recognize the interdependence of all existence. Our faith calls on us to seek solutions to environmental degradation. We are called by our consciences to support climate solutions that harness clean energy and bring justice to our most vulnerable here and around the world.

Most are now aware of the severe consequences of the Earth's changing climate. This not only threatens to disrupt key ecological processes, but will exacerbate worldwide inequality as its impacts disproportionately affect marginalized groups in vulnerable regions. Therefore, we ask you to support The Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013, HB 226.

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and Fukushima nuclear reactor damage in Japan are stark reminders of the grave consequences of our reliance on fossil and nuclear energy. The impacts are huge and their duration still unknown. Hurricane Sandy is emblematic of changes that relate to weather. As a coastal state, Maryland will be particularly impacted by sea level rise, with profound implications for our State's ecology, economy, and culture.

2013 brings renewed opportunities for Maryland citizens to lead on climate change and renewable energy. Maryland can soon begin generating electricity with wind turbines in the shallow waters off Ocean City, launching an offshore wind industry for America. This initiative will minimize our State's reliance on fossil energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce unemployment. Now more than ever we are called to transform Maryland's energy industry and protect our health and environment.

Currently, the majority of Maryland's energy is from coal-powered plants. These release a staggering amount of greenhouse gas and other pollutants each year. Coal extraction, which often involves mountaintop removal, is devastating to biodiversity, and to human health and well being. Cleaner energy blows freely just off our beaches. The Federal government has recently made 277 square nautical miles off the coast of Maryland available for lease by wind power companies:

This moderate-sized 300MW wind farm would have the potential to generate up to one third of our region's energy needs, significantly reducing our reliance on coal power and cutting its toxic emissions.

- Wind is renewable and free "fuel", providing stable energy prices for customers
- Around 4,000 jobs will be needed for construction and maintenance of offshore wind farms.
- New Jersey, Delaware and Massachusetts already have wind energy plans underway.
- Proposed wind farms will be located 10-20 miles offshore, will not be visible from land.
- According to the Audubon Society, well located wind turbines pose less threat to birds than mining and burning coal.
- Air pollution from burning coal increases cardiac and breathing problems for thousands of Marylanders at great expense in suffering, death and in private and public health care costs.

Offshore wind farms will require a shift in our State's current regulatory paradigms. Specifically, energy companies need incentives to invest billions, so that the significant start-up costs may be recouped. We urge you to pass HB226, legislation that provides a framework for offshore wind for Maryland and directs Maryland utilities to buy energy from offshore wind farms.