

ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATS NEWS RELEASE

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BILL TO PROMOTE SOLAR, WIND AND BIOMASS ENERGY GENERATION IN NEW JERSEY ADVANCES

Measure Would Allow Solar, Wind, Biomass Energy Facilities and Equipment on Farms

TRENTON) – Legislation sponsored by Assembly members Upendra Chivukula, Connie Wagner, Douglas H. Fisher and John F. McKeon to promote solar, biomass and wind energy generation on New Jersey farms was released today by an Assembly committee.

The bill (A-2859) would allow a person who owns preserved farmland to build, install and operate solar, biomass and wind energy facilities and equipment on the farm, provided it doesn't interfere with use of the land for farming.

"This is yet another way for New Jersey to promote the production of clean, alternative energy that can boost our economy in this time of crisis," said Chivukula (D-Somerset). "It also just makes sense to allow farmers to find new and innovative ways to power their facilities and equipment."

"Allowing farmers to take advantage of the newest clean energy technologies is a sensible way to allow them to become energy self-sufficient," said Fisher (D-Cumberland). "Farmland preservation and alternative energy have similar goals – protecting our environment and our economy. Allowing farmers to do both at the same time is smart policy."

The bill would require the State Agriculture Development Committee to determine whether plans to place solar and wind energy facilities on farms would interfere with agriculture.

"We're going to be simultaneously balancing the public interest in protecting farmland from further development with the public interest in promoting clean, alternative energy," said Wagner (D-Bergen). "And while doing this, we're going to ensure its done in a way that preserves the beauty and character of the state and the local communities where farmland has been preserved."

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"We're going to put safeguards in place to ensure these energy farms won't have any adverse impact on soil, water resources, air quality and other natural resources of the land and surrounding area," said McKeon (D-Essex). "Anything that is approved for these farms will fall within what's considered generally accepted farming operations and practices, so we'll be promoting farming and clean energy all at once. Those are two laudable goals."

The bill was released by the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. It now goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for further consideration.

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