



**Bill: Maine L.D. 901/H.P. 629**

**Senate Environment and Energy Committee**

**Testimony of: Andrew Gohn, American Wind Energy Association**

**Date: March 23, 2017**

**Position: Support**

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Chairman Saviello, Chairman Tucker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Gohn and I am the Eastern Region Director of State Policy at the American Wind Energy Association. Please accept this written testimony in opposition to L.D. 901/H.P. 629.

The American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) is the national trade association for the U.S. wind industry – the country’s fastest growing energy industry. With thousands of wind industry members and wind policy advocates, AWEA promotes wind energy as a clean source of electricity for American consumers.

In addition to spectacular scenery, Maine is blessed with tremendous natural resources. In much of the state, landowners know that the wind is a resource that is always in abundance. Developers of wind energy projects work with property owners and communities to turn that wind into economic development, tax base, land-lease payments – transformative investments in these areas.

Our member companies recognize the importance of protecting scenic resources and work hard to meet the very high standards the state has already set for visual assessment requirements around these protected areas. Compliance with these requirements already imposes a significant cost on project development and is unusually burdensome when compared to standards in other states. On top of added cost, this requirement brings additional uncertainty to project development.

L.D. 901/H.P. 629 would increase the area subject to this additional cost and uncertainty exponentially. An increase in visual assessment requirement distance subjects an exponentially greater area to these burdensome requirements. In all, this legislation would place more than 26% of the state under a burden of regulatory presumption that visual assessment would be required. Under existing law, that burden would only apply to about 6.5% of the state.

Maintaining the ability of wind projects to be sited is important to the growing manufacturing opportunities in wind energy as well. Almost 2,000 Mainers work either at a wind farm, or manufacturing components for wind projects. This industrial base includes workers at Aegis – a bearing manufacturer in Mechanic Falls, and gearbox builders at Owens Corning in Brunswick, as well as additional facilities around the state.

Access to these turbine and manufacturing opportunities is also important to Maine’s economic future. With wind power expected to double in the next 5 years, it is no wonder that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics finds wind turbine technician to be the fastest-growing job in the nation for the next 10 years. These are good-paying jobs that allow Mainers to raise families. And the U.S. wind industry hires veterans at a rate 50% higher than the national average, providing opportunities for returning service members.

Wind energy is an important and growing part of Maine’s economy. This legislation threatens to slam the brakes on wind energy in the state, punishing landowners and squandering opportunities for significant



economic development and job creation. For this reason, AWEA respectfully requests your opposition to L.D. 901/H.P. 629.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.