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126th MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2014

Legislative Document

No. 1652

S.P. 644

In Senate, December 23, 2013

An Act To Support Solar Energy Development in Maine

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Reference to the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator VITELLI of Sagadahoc.

Cosponsored by Representative GIDEON of Freeport and

Senators: President ALFOND of Cumberland, BOYLE of Cumberland, JACKSON of Aroostook, LANGLEY of Hancock, MILLETT of Cumberland, SAVIELLO of Franklin, Representatives: BEAVERS of South Berwick, BERRY of Bowdoinham, DORNEY of Norridgewock, Speaker EVES of North Berwick, GRANT of Gardiner, HOBBS of Saco, HUBBELL of Bar Harbor, McCABE of Skowhegan, McGOWAN of York, MORRISON of South Portland, RYKERSON of Kittery.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA c. 34-B** is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 34-B**

4 **THE MAINE SOLAR ENERGY ACT**

5 **§3471. Short title**

6 This chapter may be known and cited as "the Maine Solar Energy Act."

7 **§3472. Legislative findings**

8 **1. Public interest.** The Legislature finds that it is in the public interest to develop
9 the State's indigenous renewable energy resources, including abundant and widespread
10 solar energy, in a manner that protects and improves the health and well-being of the
11 citizens and natural environment of the State while also providing tangible economic
12 benefits to communities, ratepayers and the overall economy. The Legislature finds that
13 the development of the solar energy potential in the State needs to be integrated into the
14 existing energy supply and transmission systems in a way that achieves system reliability,
15 total capital cost-effectiveness and optimum short-term and long-term benefits to the
16 citizens of the State. The Legislature finds it is in the public interest for the State to
17 encourage and plan for significant solar energy production as part of a strategy to reduce
18 greenhouse gas emissions and meet the goals established in the state climate action plan
19 developed pursuant to Title 38, section 577. The Legislature also finds it is in the public
20 interest to encourage solar energy research and the development of solar energy
21 generation equipment manufacturing facilities in the State.

22 **2. Contribution of solar energy development.** The Legislature finds and declares
23 that the solar energy resources of the State constitute a valuable indigenous and
24 renewable energy resource and that solar energy development, which is unique in its
25 benefits to and impacts on the climate and the natural environment, makes a significant
26 contribution to the general welfare of the citizens of the State for the following reasons:

27 A. Solar energy is an economically feasible, large-scale energy resource that does
28 not rely on fossil fuel combustion and therefore it can displace energy provided by
29 that source and reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; consequently,
30 solar energy development may address energy needs while making a significant
31 contribution to achievement of the State's renewable energy and greenhouse gas
32 reduction objectives, including those in Title 38, section 576;

33 B. There is an inexhaustible supply of solar energy throughout the State that can be
34 effectively used for heat and electricity using current technology, and solar energy
35 can be harnessed on large and small scales using simple or advanced technology;

36 C. The State has no indigenous supplies of fossil fuel. All fossil fuel must be
37 imported into the State, at great cost to the economy and with significant hazards to
38 the health of the citizens of the State and natural environment;

1 D. At present and increasingly in the future with anticipated technological advances
2 that promise to increase the number of places in the State where grid-scale solar
3 energy development is economically viable and changes in the electrical power
4 market that favor clean power sources, solar energy may be used to displace electrical
5 power that is generated from fossil fuel combustion and thus reduce our citizens'
6 dependence on imported oil and natural gas and improve environmental quality and
7 state and regional energy security; and

8 E. Renewable energy resources within the State have the potential, over time, to
9 provide enough energy for the State's homeowners and businesses to significantly
10 reduce their use of oil and liquid petroleum-fueled heating systems by transitioning to
11 renewable energy-based heating systems and to reduce their use of petroleum-fueled
12 motor vehicles by transitioning to electric-powered motor vehicles. Electrification of
13 heating and transportation has potential to increase the State's energy independence,
14 to help stabilize total residential and commercial energy bills and to reduce
15 greenhouse gas emissions.

16 **§3473. Specific measures to support solar energy**

17 **1. Monitoring.** The commission shall monitor the level of solar energy development
18 in the State in relation to the goals in section 3474, basic trends in solar energy markets
19 and the likely costs and benefits for ratepayers from solar energy development, including
20 but not limited to minimizing peak load on transmission systems.

21 **2. Economic development.** Within existing programs and resources, the State,
22 including the Small Enterprise Growth Program, as established in Title 10, chapter 13;
23 the Maine Technology Institute, as established in Title 5, section 12004-G, subsection
24 33-D; the Maine Rural Development Authority, as established in Title 5, section 12004-F,
25 subsection 18; the Finance Authority of Maine, as established in Title 10, chapter 110;
26 and the Department of Economic and Community Development, shall seek opportunities
27 to promote investment in solar energy development, generation and manufacturing.

28 **§3474. Determination of public policy; state solar energy generation goals**

29 **1. Encouragement of solar energy-related development.** It is the policy of the
30 State in furtherance of the goals established in subsection 2 to encourage the attraction of
31 appropriately sited development related to solar energy, including any additional
32 transmission and other energy infrastructure needed to transport additional solar energy to
33 market, consistent with all state environmental standards; the permitting and financing of
34 solar energy projects; and the siting, permitting, financing and construction of solar
35 energy research and manufacturing facilities.

36 **2. State solar energy generation goals.** The goals for solar energy generation in the
37 State, including all production of electricity and thermal energy through solar energy
38 technologies, using any conversion of units from thermal energy into megawatts that the
39 commission considers appropriate, are that there be:

40 A. At least 40 megawatts of installed capacity by 2016;

41 B. At least 200 megawatts of installed capacity by 2020; and

