

Reinstating Ohio's alternative-energy standards must become a priority for Gov. John Kasich: editorial

By [Editorial Board](#)

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There's good news about the possible thaw of Ohio's frozen renewable-energy and energy-efficiency benchmarks. First, Republican Gov. John Kasich [remains opposed](#) to continuing the freeze beyond its scheduled 2017 expiration. Second, the General Assembly evidently won't debate until next year bids to weaken the benchmarks or extend the wrongheaded freeze -- ensuring a measured discussion instead of a rush to judgment.

But during that alternative-energy debate, Kasich can't limit himself to saying he opposes the freeze; he has to be willing to press his point forcefully with the GOP-led legislature.

In 2008, a virtually unanimous legislature passed, and then-Gov. Ted Strickland signed, Senate Bill 221, which required, through 2024, a gradually increasing share of the electricity sold to Ohioans to come from alternative energy, including advanced nuclear and solar.

But in 2014, a divided legislature passed Senate Bill 310 freezing the benchmarks for two years. Barring further legislative action, they'll resume in 2017 at what would have been the 2015 benchmark.

General Assembly Republicans might well have repealed the benchmarks altogether, had Kasich not [threatened a veto](#). Still, on Sept. 30 of this year, the legislature's Energy Mandates Study Committee [recommended extending the freeze indefinitely](#), citing uncertainties and the contested legality of the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, announced Aug. 3. (On Friday, through Attorney General Mike DeWine, Ohio [joined](#) 23 other states in a lawsuit challenging the Obama plan.)

But that shouldn't be an argument for eliminating an alternative-energy policy that's [already brought jobs and investment to Ohio](#).

Last week, Sen. Troy Balderson, a Zanesville Republican who sponsored the freeze and co-chaired the study committee, said legislators are unlikely to debate the issue further until next year.

Meanwhile, a spokesman confirmed Kasich's stance that "a continued freeze of Ohio's energy standards is unacceptable" and said his administration "[stands] willing to work with the [legislature] to craft a bill that supports a diverse mix of reliable, low-cost energy sources."

The spokesman added that the administration believes energy efficiency measures are "typically a more cost-effective option than building new electric generation like wind turbines, natural gas, coal or nuclear plants." That's far from a resounding vote of confidence in alternative energy, but, assuming good faith in Columbus, state lawmakers appear poised to debate rather than rubber-stamp further bids to crimp Ohio's energy benchmarks.

