


Thursday, September 10, 2015 5:59 PM ET  Extra

Ohio clean energy advocates call for reinstatement of renewable energy standards

By [Andrew Coffman Smith](#)

Clean energy advocates in Ohio are calling on policymakers to reinstate renewable energy and energy efficiency standards after the state suspended those standards in 2014.

Ohio's Energy Future Tour, a coalition of business and environmental groups, issued a report that called on the state to lift its "freeze" on the standards and start complying with the EPA's Clean Power Plan that seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The call for the reinstatement of the standards and the repeal of new limits on wind turbine installations was released in time for the state Legislature's Energy Mandates Study Committee to consider it before making final recommendations on Ohio's energy policies. The Republican-dominated panel, which supported freezing the standards, has until the end of September to make its recommendations.

One of the pieces of legislation the panel supported is S.B. 310, which was signed into law in 2014. It placed a two-year freeze on 2008 state rules that required Ohio utilities to both cut their customers' power usage by 22% through energy efficiency and generate at least 25% of their power from alternative energy sources by 2025. Of the electricity generated by those alternative energy sources, at least half was to come from renewables such as hydropower, biomass and wind with 0.5% coming from solar. The freeze returned the 2015 and 2016 renewable energy benchmarks to the 2014 level of 2.5%.

Another change in the law that the panel supported effectively reduced the number of wind turbines in the state by requiring that they be located at least 1,300 feet from the nearest property line, instead of the nearest inhabited residence, as previously required.

The report further said Ohio needs strong political leadership to put an end to an uncertain and inconsistent set of guidelines for renewables and energy efficiency. It said pro-clean energy businesses that participated in the coalition and its tour of public meetings continue to pursue "the proven advantages of these technologies through their companies."

"Unfortunately, due to the freeze on renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, many of them must now go out of state to sell their products, generate new customers, and bid on projects. Local officials who previously saw their communities benefit from the influx of tax revenue and job opportunities now see the potential for new growth in this field diminishing," the report said.

Liberal think tank Center for American Progress likewise [said in March](#) that the decision to freeze the standards has created uncertainty for investors about what will come after the freeze is lifted.

Finally, with respect to complying with the EPA's Clean Power Plan, the report concluded: "The data are clear: Ohio has the ability to meet the Clean Power Plan when clean energy comes into play. If Ohio reinstates the standards by at least 2017, we will be ahead of the game in building up a store of clean energy resources and programs that deliver cost-effective emissions reductions, and in positioning Ohio as a leader in the clean energy economy."