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For the Sake of Resident & Taxpayers, Pause Governor's Offshore Wind Plan

Governor Murphy's Energy Master Plan (EMP) for New Jersey is heavily dependent on offshore wind turbines to reduce carbon emissions even though they are costly, unreliable, and environmentally suspect.

The state has already been through a disappointing fiasco with the Danish company Ørsted, which abandoned its offshore wind plans. Undeterred, the governor is doubling down on his plan by putting state resources behind the massive Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind (ASOW) project, which will be 8.9 miles off the coast of Ocean and Atlantic counties. The ASOW project should be stopped immediately until offshore wind turbines can be fully evaluated for cost effectiveness, safety, and environmental damage—not to mention their ability to be a long-term energy source for New Jersey. The state's EMP is not an expression of the will of New Jersey's residents, energy experts, or the legislature. It is the result of the governor's Executive Orders designed to bolster his standing with progressives as a climate warrior.

The Garden State Initiative think tank recently said Gov. Murphy's EMP mandate to attain 100% clean energy by 2035 is "not realistic."

As the mayor of a New Jersey shore town, I expect pushback from those who say I am just trying to protect my turf. I am, but there is more to the story.

Undoubtedly the industrialization of the ocean will have a severely negative impact on the Jersey Shore and beyond. The work required to erect huge steel towers—1,000 feet high—anchor them into the seabed, and connect to them blades that are as long as the Eiffel Tower is high, will rival the most intense construction projects in the state's history. Add to that the six-foot deep trenches that will be dug into the seabed to channel transmission cables to shore and it is blatantly clear that wind turbines will harm sea life, our commercial and recreational fishing industries, and the local economy. After all, who wants to vacation at an industrial site?

A 2024 study prepared by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company reported that the ASOW offshore wind project will result in the loss of 835,000 visitors annually to the Long Beach Island municipalities, resulting in the loss of \$450.2 million in tourism spending and a total economic hit of \$668.2 million, including an



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\$80.3 million decline state and local tax revenue. The economic disruption will cost hundreds of jobs and the devaluation of thousands of properties in shore communities—to which the state is indifferent.

Ironically, on July 17, 2024—after years of pushing wind turbines on us and denying their environmental impact—the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) issued requests for proposals making \$4.75 million available for research projects “focused on furthering ecologically responsible offshore wind development.”

Shouldn't this have been the first step in the offshore wind process?

To the majority of readers who live miles from the shore, I am sure my concerns seem parochial. But all officials in the state, whether in the Highlands or the Pinelands, should be very concerned about the spiraling cost of electric power for homeowners, renters, business owners, and taxpayers that will be set in motion by wind turbines.

An independent analysis concludes that the cost of the state's offshore wind projects will exceed \$100 billion and raise electric customer rates by 55% for residential customers, 70% for commercial customers, and 85% for industrial customers. For context, in 2024 wholesale power purchase prices are roughly \$55 dollars per megawatt-hour. The BPU recently approved contracts for offshore wind with a price of \$144 per megawatt-hour. In addition, the costs associated with transmission upgrades to distribute the electricity are forecast to increase progressively from \$1 per megawatt-hour to roughly \$40 per megawatt-hour by 2047.

The cost of decommissioning the windmills in 25 years has not been accounted for.

In July, ASOW announced it wants to renegotiate its bid with the BPU, seeking higher rates caused by inflation and high interest rates. In April, eight shore towns urged the BPU to reject any attempts by ASOW to renegotiate its original agreement. We hope it will.

Inevitable Tax Hikes

Municipal and county officials have been shut out of the wind turbine discussion, but we will all bear the brunt of the outrage from consumers and business owners who will be paying more for electricity. Taxpayers will also shoulder the increase in taxes caused by high electric rates for schools, municipal, and county buildings.

Today's businesses are increasingly reliant on electricity to power the workplace. Rising electric rates will be another disincentive to invest in the state. The GSI estimates the price tag for the EMP will be \$40 billion and would drive even more people and jobs out of the state.

For the sake of an affordable future for New Jersey, I am asking all municipal and county elected officials to call on the state legislature to put a halt to all offshore wind projects until an energy committee of all stakeholders can be empaneled to develop a long-term, realistic, affordable energy plan for New Jersey. 🇯🇵

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