

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Michael Caron Pushing Geothermal Energy



State Rep. Michael Caron, R-44, Killingly, Plainfield, Sterling, thanked the legislature and the governor for enacting a new law to examine geothermal and other alternative heating systems that use energy from the earth, rather than burning oil and gas.

“There are so many ways to provide heat and light that can be developed with minimal damage to the environment,” said Rep. Michael Caron, a leading advocate of energy conservation and energy efficiency. “Geothermal heat is one of those technologies that are becoming more accepted.”

Gov. M. Jodi Rell has signed into law HB 7311, An Act Concerning Geothermal Heat Systems, to examine the use of geothermal heat that is pumped from below the surface of the ground.

Rep. Caron noted that the Connecticut legislature has approved other energy saving initiatives, such as encouraging low-energy design and materials in new school construction and state-owned buildings.

The geothermal law signed by the governor also helps farmers by extending to farms a property tax exemption for renewable energy and hydropower facilities when they are used to generate electricity for the farm. Current law exempts such facilities when used to generate electricity for single-family dwellings or multifamily dwellings containing no more than four units.

The bill also requires the Renewable Energy Investments Advisory Committee to study and file a legislative report on geothermal heat systems.

TAX-EXEMPT RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

The bill's tax exemption for farm use applies to energy derived from:

1. solar or wind power;
2. fuel cells;
3. methane gas from landfills;
4. ocean thermal, wave, and tidal power;
5. low emission advanced renewable energy conversion technologies;

6. sustainable biomass facilities that emit nitrogen within designated limits or became operative before July 1, 2003 and have a generating capacity of less than 500 kilowatts; and
 7. run-of-the-river hydropower facilities that became operative after July 1, 2003 as long as they do not appreciably change the river's flow or have a generation capacity of greater than five megawatts.
- The bill also exempts hydropower facilities, as defined above, that became operative before July 1, 2003.

GEOHERMAL HEAT SYSTEM STUDY

Among other things, the Renewable Energy Investments Advisory Committee is charged by law with assisting Connecticut Innovations, Incorporated in developing a comprehensive plan for spending state renewable energy investment funds. The bill requires that it study:

1. the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of geothermal and other advanced heat pump systems;
2. appropriate industrial, commercial, and municipal applications of geothermal systems;
3. any financial or other barriers to increasing geothermal use; and
4. ways to promote more applications.

The committee must consult with the Department of Public Utility Control and Energy Conservation Management Board. It must report its findings and recommendations to the Energy and Technology Committee by February 1, 2008.

Rep. Caron, a member of the legislature's Energy and Technology Committee, serves the 44th Assembly District of Killingly, Plainfield and Sterling in the state House of Representatives.