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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- ENERGY FACILITY SITING  
ACT

Introduced By: Senators de la Cruz, Rogers, DiPalma, Ciccone, Raptakis, and E Morgan

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 42-98-1, 42-98-2, 42-98-3, 42-98-5, 42-98-7, 42-98-8, 42-98-9, 42-  
2   98-9.1, 42-98-10, 42-98-11 and 42-98-16 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-98 entitled "Energy  
3   Facility Siting Act" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4           **42-98-1. Legislative findings.**

5           (a) The general assembly recognizes that reasonably priced, reliable sources of energy are  
6   vital to the well-being and prosperity of the people of this state; that there are major issues of public  
7   health and safety and impact upon the environment related to the technologies and energy sources  
8   used in some facilities; that some energy facilities require a major commitment of funds and  
9   resources and require many years to build that the decision to permit or deny their construction will  
10   have long term impact on the economy of the state; that these decisions will affect the availability  
11   and cost of the energy; and that the evaluation of proposals must recognize and consider the need  
12   for these facilities in relation to the overall impact of the facilities upon public health and safety,  
13   the environment and the economy of the state;

14           (b) The general assembly further finds that the authority to regulate many aspects of the  
15   issues involved in the siting of major energy facilities currently exists in a variety of agencies within  
16   the government of the state and the political subdivisions of the state; that there is overlapping  
17   jurisdiction among several state agencies in the siting of energy facilities; and that there is the  
18   potential for conflicting decisions being issued by the various agencies having authority over the

1 different aspects of the siting of a major energy facility;

2 (c) The jurisdiction of each state agency should be defined, and the role of each agency in  
3 energy siting should be delineated, to eliminate overlap and duplication and to insure that  
4 expeditious decisions are made within a time frame to be determined by law; and that in addition  
5 to the existing regulation, statewide and regional planning for energy resources and the assessment  
6 of our state's need for energy should be on-going activities within Rhode Island;

7 (d) There is need for a coordinated decision on any major energy facility; the technical  
8 expertise for this evaluation is available within existing agencies involved with the siting process;  
9 ~~and~~

10 (e) There is a need for coordinating and expediting the review of each state agency and that  
11 the authority and responsibility to perform that function should be established; ~~and~~

12 (f) The general assembly recognizes that a host community for a proposed or existing major  
13 generating facility is uniquely affected by the energy facility siting process.

14 **42-98-2. Declaration of policy.**

15 It shall be the policy of this state to assure that:

16 (1) The facilities required to meet the energy needs of this and succeeding generations of  
17 Rhode Islanders are planned for, considered, and built in a timely and orderly fashion;

18 (2) Construction, operation, and/or alteration of major energy facilities shall only be  
19 undertaken when those actions are justified by long term state and/or regional energy need  
20 forecasts;

21 (3) The energy shall be produced at the least possible cost to the consumer consistent with  
22 the objective of ensuring that the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the facility shall  
23 produce the fewest possible adverse effects on the quality of the state's environment; most  
24 particularly, its land and its wildlife and resources, the health and safety of its citizens, the purity  
25 of its air and water, its aquatic and marine life, and its esthetic and recreational value to the public;

26 (4) The licensure and regulatory authority of the state be consolidated in a single body,  
27 which will render the final licensing decision concerning the siting, construction, operation, and/or  
28 alteration of major energy facilities;

29 (5) An energy facility planning process shall be created through which the statewide  
30 planning program, in conjunction with the division of public utilities and carriers, will be  
31 empowered to undertake evaluations and projections of long and short term energy needs, and any  
32 other matters that are necessary to establish the state energy plans, goals, and policies. The state  
33 planning council shall be authorized and empowered to adopt a long term plan assessing the state's  
34 future energy needs and the best strategy for meeting them, as part of the state guide plan by January

1 1, 1991.

2 (6) The construction, operation, and/or alteration of major energy facilities shall be  
3 consistent with the state's established energy plans, goals, and policy.

4 (7) Before approving the construction, operation, and/or alteration of major energy  
5 facilities, the board shall determine whether cost-effective efficiency and conservation  
6 opportunities provide an appropriate alternative to the proposed facility.

7 (8) The energy facilities siting board shall give priority to energy generation projects based  
8 on the degree to which such projects meet criteria including, but not limited to:

9 (i) Using renewable fuels; ~~or~~ natural gas, ~~or coal processed by "clean coal technology"~~ as  
10 their primary fuel;

11 (ii) Maximizing efficiency;

12 (iii) Using low levels of high-quality water;

13 (iv) Using existing energy-generation facilities and sites;

14 (v) Producing low levels of potentially harmful air emissions;

15 (vi) Producing low levels of wastewater discharge;

16 (vii) Producing low levels of waste into the solid waste stream; and

17 (viii) Having dual fuel capacity.

18 The board shall, within its rules and regulations, provide guidelines and definitions of  
19 appropriate standards for the criteria designated in this subsection (8) by January 1, 1991.

20 **42-98-3. Definitions.**

21 As used in this chapter:

22 (1) "Advisory agencies" means the agencies, councils, boards, departments, and officials  
23 of state or political subdivisions of the state which, absent this chapter, would have statutory  
24 authority to grant or deny a permit, license, variance, or assent, and which shall function at the  
25 direction of the board for hearing an issue and rendering an advisory opinion thereon, including,  
26 but not limited to, the public utilities commission, department of transportation, department of  
27 environmental management, historical preservation and heritage commission, division of planning,  
28 department of health, office of energy resources, municipal zoning board, municipal planning  
29 board, municipal building inspector, and municipal tax assessor.

30 ~~(2)~~ (2) "Agency" means any agency, council, board, or commission of the state or political  
31 subdivision of the state.

32 ~~(3)~~ (3) "Alteration" means a significant modification to a major energy facility, which, as  
33 determined by the board, will result in a significant impact on the environment, or the public health,  
34 safety, and welfare. Conversion from one type of fuel to another shall not be considered to be an

1 “alteration.”

2 ~~(e)~~(4) “Board” for purposes of this chapter refers to the siting board.

3 ~~(d) “Clean coal technology” means one of the technologies developed in the clean coal~~  
4 ~~technology program of the United States Department of Energy, and shown to produce emissions~~  
5 ~~levels substantially equal to those of natural gas fired power plants.~~

6 ~~(e) “Major energy facility” means facilities for the extraction, production, conversion, and~~  
7 ~~processing of coal; facilities for the generation of electricity designed or capable of operating at a~~  
8 ~~gross capacity of forty megawatts (40 MW) or more; transmission lines of sixty nine (69) Kv or~~  
9 ~~over; facilities for the conversion, gasification, treatment, transfer, or storage of liquefied natural~~  
10 ~~and liquefied petroleum gases; facilities for the processing, enrichment, storage, or disposal of~~  
11 ~~nuclear fuels or nuclear byproducts; facilities for the refining of oil, gas, or other petroleum~~  
12 ~~products; facilities of ten megawatts (10 MW) or greater capacity for the generation of electricity~~  
13 ~~by water power, and facilities associated with the transfer of oil, gas, and coal via pipeline; any~~  
14 ~~energy facility project of the Rhode Island commerce corporation; the board may promulgate~~  
15 ~~regulations to further define “major energy facility” to the extent further definition is required to~~  
16 ~~carry out the purpose of this chapter, provided that any waste to energy facility shall not be deemed~~  
17 ~~a major energy facility for the purposes of this chapter.~~

18 (5) "Host community" means any municipality in the state in which all or the majority of  
19 a major energy facility is or shall be located. For the purpose of defining "located", linear aspects  
20 of a major energy facility that transit through multiple municipalities, to include electric  
21 transmission lines as used in this section and pipelines as used in this section shall not be considered  
22 in determining where "the majority" of a major energy facility is or shall be located.

23 (6) For purpose of this chapter, there shall be two (2) types of "major energy facilities":

24 (i) "Major generating facility" means facilities for the generation of electricity designed or  
25 capable of operating at a gross capacity of forty megawatts (40 MW) or more.

26 (ii) “Major non-generating facility” means:

27 (A) Facilities for the extraction, production, conversion, and processing of coal;

28 (B) Electric transmission lines of sixty-nine kilovolt (69 KV) or over;

29 (C) Facilities for the conversion, gasification, treatment, transfer, or storage of liquefied  
30 natural and liquefied petroleum gases, except natural gas pipelines that have a maximum allowable  
31 operating pressure (MOAP) of two hundred pounds per square inch gauge (200 psig) or less;

32 (D) Facilities for the processing, enrichment, storage, or disposal of nuclear fuels or nuclear  
33 byproducts;

34 (E) Facilities for the refining of oil, gas, or other petroleum products; and

1 [\(E\) Facilities associated with the transfer of oil, gasoline, and coal via pipeline.](#)

2 **42-98-5. Board established.**

3 (a) There is established the siting board which shall be a part of state government.

4 [\(1\) The siting board shall consist of ~~three \(3\)~~ five \(5\) members, as follows: the chairperson](#)  
5 [of the public utilities commission, or designee, who shall serve as chairperson of the siting board;](#)  
6 [the director of the department of environmental management, or designee; ~~and~~ the associate](#)  
7 [director of administration for planning, or designee; the secretary of commerce, or designee; and a](#)  
8 [public member appointed in accordance with § 42-98-5.1. ~~Any member of the board who recuses~~](#)  
9 [him or herself shall designate his or her own successor from his or her respective agency.](#)

10 [\(2\) Any member of the board, other than a public member, may select their own designee](#)  
11 [from their respective agency who shall serve until a final determination is made in the proceeding](#)  
12 [for which they were designated.](#)

13 (b) Each member of the board, [including designees](#), shall take an oath to administer the  
14 duties of office faithfully and impartially and that oath shall be filed in the office of the secretary  
15 of state.

16 (c) The members of the board shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed  
17 for their actual expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties. The board may  
18 engage any consultants or expert witnesses that it deems necessary to implement its statutory  
19 responsibilities; provided, however, that to the maximum extent possible, board staff be drawn  
20 from existing state agencies. The board shall select a coordinator to be responsible for the  
21 publication and distribution of all official minutes, reports, and documents and to further serve as  
22 director of the board staff, which shall be located at the division of public utilities and common  
23 carriers. The coordinator, under the direction of the chairperson, shall coordinate and expedite the  
24 work of the various agencies to ensure that decisions are made within the time frame established  
25 by this chapter. [The board may appoint hearing officers to conduct hearings in accordance with §](#)  
26 [42-98-5.2. Any individual designated as board staff shall be bound to comply with the ex parte](#)  
27 [provisions of § 42-35-13.](#)

28 (d) A quorum shall consist of a majority of the board. A majority vote of the board shall be  
29 required for all actions, including licensing decisions; provided, however, one member of the board  
30 may conduct any hearings the board is authorized to conduct pursuant to this chapter.

31 (e) The board shall maintain and grant free access to records and reports in its files to  
32 members of the public during normal working hours and shall permit copies of those records and  
33 reports to be made by interested members of the public at their expense; provided, however, that  
34 the board shall not permit disclosure, other than to another government agency for the sole purpose

1 of rendering an advisory opinion, of any information obtained by or submitted to the board pursuant  
2 to the provisions of this chapter, upon a showing, satisfactory to the board, that the information is  
3 entitled to protection as trade secrets or as privileged, confidential, or proprietary information. No  
4 other governmental agency shall disclose any trade secrets or privileged, confidential, or  
5 proprietary information.

6 **42-98-7. Powers and duties.**

7 (a)(1) The siting board is the licensing and permitting authority for all licenses, permits,  
8 assents, or variances that, under any statute of the state or ordinance of any political subdivision of  
9 the state, would be required for siting, construction, or alteration of a major energy facility in the  
10 state.

11 (2) Any agency, board, council, or commission of the state or political subdivision of the  
12 state that, absent this chapter, would be required to issue a permit, license, assent, or variance in  
13 order for the siting, construction, or alteration of a major energy facility to proceed, shall sit and  
14 function at the direction of the siting board. These agencies shall follow the procedures established  
15 by statute, ordinance, and/or regulation provided for determining the permit, license, assent, or  
16 variance, but, instead of issuing the permit, license, assent, or variance, shall forward its findings  
17 from the proceeding, together with the record supporting the findings and a recommendation for  
18 final action, to the siting board.

19 (3) Notwithstanding any provision in this chapter to the contrary, in those instances in  
20 which the department of environmental management exercises a permitting or licensing function  
21 under the delegated authority of federal law, including, but not limited to, the federal Clean Water  
22 Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. § 6901 et  
23 seq.), the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. § 7401 et seq.), and those state laws and regulations that  
24 implement those federal laws, the department of environmental management shall be the licensing  
25 and permitting authority. Moreover, the authority to issue licenses and permits delegated to the  
26 department of environmental management pursuant to chapter 1 of title 2 and to the coastal  
27 resources management council pursuant to chapter 23 of title 46, shall remain with those agencies,  
28 but in all other respects the department of environmental management and the coastal resources  
29 management council shall follow the procedures set forth in this chapter.

30 (b) The siting board is authorized and empowered to summon and examine witnesses and  
31 to compel the production and examination of papers, books, accounts, documents, records,  
32 certificates, and other legal evidence that may be necessary for the determination of its jurisdiction  
33 and decision of any question before, or the discharge of any duty required by law of, the board.

34 (c) The siting board is empowered to issue any orders, rules, or regulations as may be

1 required to effectuate the purposes of this chapter. [The board shall review its rules and regulations](#)  
2 [from time to time and shall modify, amend, or repeal any rules or regulations as may be required](#)  
3 [to effectuate the purposes of this chapter.](#)

4 (d) The siting board shall, by regulation, determine the standards for intervention. [Each](#)  
5 [host community shall be granted intervenor status as of right.](#)

6 (e) The siting board's proceedings shall in all respects comply with the requirements of the  
7 Administrative Procedures Act, chapter 35 of this title, except where otherwise explicitly provided.

8 **42-98-8. Applications — Contents — Acceptance for filing.**

9 (a) The rules and regulations promulgated by the board pursuant to § 42-98-7(c) shall  
10 prescribe the form and contents of applications under this chapter. The applications shall contain  
11 at least the following, where applicable:

12 (1) Identification of the proposed owner(s) of the facility, including identification of all  
13 affiliates of the proposed owners, as the term is defined in § 39-3-27.

14 (2) Detailed description of the proposed facility, including its function and operating  
15 characteristics, and complete plans as to all structures, including underground construction and  
16 transmission facilities, underground or aerial, associated with the proposed facility.

17 The complete plans shall be the basis for determining jurisdiction under the energy facility  
18 siting act and shall be the plans submitted to all [reviewing](#) agencies whose permit is required under  
19 the law.

20 (3) A detailed description and analysis of the impact of the proposed facility on its physical  
21 and social environment together with a detailed description of all environmental characteristics of  
22 the proposed site; [including, but not limited to, the types of fuels and waste products used, stored,](#)  
23 [and produced by the facility,](#) and a summary of all studies prepared and relied upon in connection  
24 therewith.

25 Where applicable these descriptions and analysis shall include a review of current  
26 independent, scientific research pertaining to electric and magnetic fields (EMF). The review shall  
27 provide data assessing potential health risks associated with EMF exposure. For the purposes of  
28 this chapter "prudent avoidance" shall refer to measures to be implemented in order to protect the  
29 public from EMF exposure.

30 (4) All studies and forecasts, complete with the information, data, methodology, and  
31 assumptions on which they are based, on which the applicant intends to rely in showing the need  
32 for the proposed facility under the statewide master construction plan submitted annually.

33 (5) Complete detail as to the estimated construction cost of the proposed facility, the  
34 projected maintenance and operation costs, estimated costs to the community such as safety and

1 public health issues, storm damage and power outages, estimated costs to businesses and  
2 homeowners due to power outages, the estimated unit cost of energy to be produced by the proposed  
3 facility, and expected methods of financing the facility.

4 (6) A complete life-cycle management plan for the proposed facility, including measures  
5 for protecting the public health and safety and the environment during the facility's normal and off-  
6 normal operations; including, but not limited to, plans for the handling and disposal of wastes from  
7 the facility, and plans for the decommissioning of the facility at the end of its useful life.

8 (7) A study of alternatives to the proposed facility, including alternatives as to energy  
9 sources, methods of energy production, and sites for the facility, together with reasons for the  
10 applicant's rejection of these alternatives. The study shall include estimates of facility cost and unit  
11 energy costs of alternatives considered.

12 (8) A detailed description of the short-term and long-term economic impacts associated  
13 with constructing and operating the proposed project.

14 (b) Each application shall be reviewed prior to docketing. The board shall conduct a  
15 preliminary review to determine whether the application contains each item as required by  
16 subsection (a) of this section. Within thirty (30) days of the filing of an ~~applicant~~ application under  
17 this chapter, the board shall notify the applicant whether the application is in the form and addresses  
18 the matters that are required by this section and the rules and regulations as are promulgated  
19 pursuant to § 42-98-7. An application meeting these requirements shall then be docketed. Any  
20 application deemed to be deficient shall be returned to the applicant, together with a concise and  
21 explicit statement of the application's deficiencies. Within fifteen (15) days of the resubmission of  
22 an application following a rejection for deficiency, the board shall either docket the application  
23 together with specification of continuing deficiencies noted by the board, if any, or shall issue a  
24 decision rejecting the application due to continuing deficiencies.

25 **42-98-9. Applications — Procedures for review — Preliminary hearing.**

26 (a) Within sixty (60) days following the board's docketing of an application, the board  
27 shall, on not less than forty-five (45) days' notice to all agencies, subdivisions of the state, and the  
28 public, convene a preliminary hearing on the application to determine the issues to be considered  
29 by the board in evaluating the application, and to designate those agencies of state government and  
30 of political subdivisions of the state that shall act at the direction of the board for the purpose of  
31 rendering advisory opinions on these issues, and to determine petitions for intervention.

32 (b) The board shall consider as issues in every proceeding the ability of the proposed  
33 facility to meet the requirements of the laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances under which, absent  
34 this chapter, the applicant would be required to obtain a permit, license, variance, or assent. The



1 agency of state government or of a political subdivision of the state that, absent this chapter, would  
2 have statutory authority to grant or deny the permit, license, variance, or assent, shall function at  
3 the direction of the board for hearing the issue and rendering an advisory opinion thereon.

4 (c) The board ~~shall~~ may limit the scope of any agency's investigation where it finds that  
5 more than one agency has jurisdiction over a matter at issue in the licensing process. In these  
6 instances, the board ~~shall~~ may determine which agency shall make the necessary findings on the  
7 issue after giving proper consideration to the expertise and resources available to each of the  
8 agencies involved.

9 (d) The public utilities commission shall conduct an investigation in which the division of  
10 planning of the department of administration, the ~~governor's~~ office of energy ~~assistance~~ resources  
11 and the division of public utilities and carriers shall participate and render an advisory opinion as  
12 to the need for the proposed facility.

13 (e) The statewide planning program within the department of administration shall conduct  
14 an investigation and render an advisory opinion as to the socio-economic impact of the proposed  
15 facility and its construction and consistency with the state guide plan.

16 (f) A decision of the board under this section shall be issued within thirty (30) days  
17 following the conclusion of the preliminary hearing and in any event within forty-five (45) days of  
18 the commencement of the hearing.

19 **42-98-9.1. Public notice and hearings on construction projects in cities and towns**  
20 **affected.**

21 (a) Upon receiving a utility company application, the board shall immediately notify, in  
22 writing, the councils of the towns and cities affected by the construction.

23 (b) ~~(1) The~~ When the subject of the application is a major non-generating facility, the board  
24 shall have at least one public hearing in ~~each town or city affected~~ the host community prior to  
25 holding its own hearings and prior to taking final action on the application. All details of acceptance  
26 for filing in § 42-98-8(a) ~~(1) — (a)(6)~~ shall be presented at town or city hearings for public comment.  
27 When the subject of the application ~~is a facility for the generation of electricity, or~~ are new facilities  
28 for the transmission of electricity, the town or city where the proposed facility would be located  
29 may request funding from the applicant to perform studies of the local environmental effects of the  
30 proposed facility. The expense of those studies shall not exceed the lesser of one hundred thousand  
31 dollars (\$100,000) or one-tenth percent (.1%) of the estimated capital cost of the proposed facility  
32 ~~located in such city or town.~~ If the applicant contests the relevance of the requested study, or  
33 believes it to be redundant with studies already performed, the applicant may request a ruling from  
34 the board whether the study is necessary and reasonably expected to produce relevant information.

1 The board's ruling shall be conclusive and final, and shall not be the basis for an interlocutory  
2 appeal, injunction or otherwise delay the board's processing of the application.

3 (2) When the subject of the application is a major generating facility, the board shall have  
4 at least three (3) public hearings in the host community prior to holding its own hearings and prior  
5 to taking final action on the application. All details of acceptance for filing in § 42-98-8(a) shall be  
6 presented at public hearings for public comment. The host community where the proposed  
7 generating facility would be located may request funding from the applicant to perform studies of  
8 the local environmental effects of the proposed facility. The expense of those studies shall not  
9 exceed the greater of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) or one-tenth percent (0.1%) of  
10 the estimated capital cost of the proposed facility, whichever is greater. The applicant shall also  
11 pay any and all fees and expenses reasonably incurred by the host community to fully participate  
12 in the facility siting process and local review including, but not limited to, fees and expenses for  
13 legal counsel, expert evaluations, transcripts, and other costs associated with the energy facility  
14 siting process. If the applicant contests any fee or expense as unrelated or unreasonable, the  
15 applicant may request a ruling from the board whether the fee or expense is related and reasonable.  
16 The board's ruling shall be conclusive and final and shall not be the basis for an interlocutory appeal,  
17 injunction, or otherwise delay the board's processing of the application.

18 (c) The applicant shall notify the citizens in towns and cities affected thirty (30) days prior  
19 to public meetings through local papers.

20 (d) The applicant shall notify ~~abutting land~~ the following property owners individually, in  
21 writing, thirty (30) days prior to the hearings, by certified mail, postage prepaid:

22 (1) For applications related to major non-generating facilities, applicants shall notify all  
23 property owners whose property is located within three hundred feet (300') from the limit of  
24 disturbance of the proposed project or the centerline of a proposed linear project; provided, no  
25 additional notice is required for sixty (60) and ninety (90) day notices of intent.

26 (2) For applications related to major generating facilities, applicants shall notify all  
27 property owners whose property is located within two (2) miles from the proposed site boundaries.

28 (e) Public input shall be a part of the decision making process.

29 **42-98-10. Agency procedures — Advisory opinion.**

30 (a) Each agency of the state or political subdivision of the state designated under § 42-98-  
31 9 shall proceed to consider the issue or issues consigned to it for review. Each advisory agency  
32 shall conclude its consideration and issue its advisory opinion not more than six (6) months  
33 following its designation under § 42-98-9 and receipt of all application materials, or any lesser time  
34 that the board may require, or the right to exercise the function shall be forfeited to the board. The

1 [board may suspend an application proceeding where an applicant fails to provide requested relevant](#)  
2 [information or materials to an advisory agency in a timely manner.](#)

3 (b) Advisory opinions issued by agencies designated under § 42-98-9 shall not be  
4 considered as final decisions of the agencies making the opinions, and shall not be subject to  
5 judicial review under § 42-35-15, or any other provision of the general laws.

6 (c) Advisory opinions issued by zoning boards of review, building inspectors, or any other  
7 agency of a municipality designated under § 42-98-9 shall not be reviewable by the public utilities  
8 commission under § 39-1-30.

9 (d) Failure or refusal of the applicant to provide requested information may be considered  
10 as grounds for recommending denial.

11 (e) At the request of the siting board, the director of environmental management and the  
12 coastal resources management council shall give priority to the review of permits for energy  
13 facilities.

14 **42-98-11. Final hearing — Standards — Decisions.**

15 (a) Within forty-five (45) days after the final date for submission of advisory opinions  
16 pursuant to § 42-98-10, the board shall convene the final hearing on the application. The purpose  
17 of ~~this~~ [the final](#) hearing shall not be to rehear the evidence which was presented previously in  
18 hearings before agencies designated under § 42-98-9, but rather to provide the applicant,  
19 intervenors, the public, and all other parties in the proceeding, the opportunity to address in a single  
20 forum, and from a consolidated, statewide prospective, the issues reviewed, and the  
21 recommendations made in the proceedings before the agencies designated under § 42-98-9. The  
22 board at this hearing may, at its discretion, allow the presentation of new evidence by any party as  
23 to the issues considered by the agencies designated under § 42-98-9. The board may limit the  
24 presentation of repetitive or cumulative evidence. The [final](#) hearing shall proceed on not less than  
25 thirty (30) days' notice to the parties and the public, shall be concluded not more than sixty (60)  
26 days following its initiation, and shall be conducted expeditiously.

27 (b) The board shall issue a decision granting a license only upon finding that the applicant  
28 has shown that:

29 (1) Construction of the proposed facility is necessary to meet the needs of the state and/or  
30 region for energy of the type to be produced by the proposed facility.

31 (2) The proposed facility is cost-justified, and can be expected to produce energy at the  
32 lowest reasonable cost to the consumer consistent with the objective of ensuring that the  
33 construction and operation of the proposed facility will be accomplished in compliance with all of  
34 the requirements of the laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances, under which, absent this chapter,

1 a permit, license, variance, or assent would be required, or that consideration of the public health,  
2 safety, welfare, security and need for the proposed facility justifies a waiver of some part of the  
3 requirements when compliance cannot be assured.

4 (3) The proposed facility will not cause unacceptable harm to the environment and will  
5 enhance the socio-economic fabric of the state.

6 (c) For multiple applications related to a single project, the board shall consider the  
7 cumulative impacts of the related applications.

8 ~~(e)~~(d) Within sixty (60) days of the conclusion of the final hearing the board shall issue its  
9 final decision on the application. A decision in favor of the application shall constitute a granting  
10 of all permits, licenses, variances, or assents, which under any law, rule, regulation, or ordinance  
11 of the state or of a political subdivision thereof which would, absent this chapter, be required for  
12 the proposed facility. The decision may be issued requiring any modification or alteration of the  
13 proposed facility, and may be issued on any condition the board deems warranted by the record,  
14 and may be issued conditional upon the applicant's receipt of permits required by federal law. The  
15 board's decision shall explicitly address each of the advisory opinions received from agencies, and  
16 the board's reasons for accepting, rejecting, or modifying, in whole or in part, any of those advisory  
17 opinions. The board shall, within ten (10) days of granting a license, with or without conditions,  
18 deliver the decision to the governor, the speaker of the Rhode Island house of representatives, and  
19 the president of the Rhode Island senate.

20 **42-98-16. Violations.**

21 (a) Failure to comply with any promulgated board rule, regulation, requirement or  
22 procedure for the licensing of energy facilities shall constitute grounds for suspension or dismissal,  
23 with or without prejudice in its discretion, of licensing proceedings, provided that the applicant  
24 shall have a reasonable opportunity to show cause for and remedy the lack of compliance.

25 (b) Failure to comply with any provision, condition or limitation contained in a board  
26 license to site, build, or alter a major energy facility and/or failure to comply with a board cease  
27 and desist order and/or a board order to remedy a non-complying action shall be grounds for  
28 suspension or revocation of the license, and/or shall be punishable by a fine of not more than twenty  
29 thousand dollars (\$20,000). Each day of continuing noncompliance shall be considered a separate  
30 violation and so punished.

31 (c) The board may require the licensee to maintain those records as are reasonable and  
32 necessary to monitor compliance with license provisions, and shall have the authority to enter onto  
33 the property of licensees to investigate complaints of noncompliance and to perform routine  
34 inspections.

1 (d) The board may designate officials or staff of any state agencies as its agents for the  
2 purposes of investigating complaints, performing routine maintenance functions and issuing  
3 written cease and desist orders.

4 (e) Nothing in this chapter shall preclude a host community from enforcing municipal  
5 ordinances, levying fines, or pursuing any other legally available enforcement remedies, unless  
6 such ordinances are in direct conflict with a certificate or license issued by the board.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 42-98 of the General Laws entitled "Energy Facility Siting Act" is  
8 hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:

9 **42-98-5.1. Public members.**

10 (a) A public member shall be appointed to the board by the governor with the advice and  
11 consent of the senate for a term of two (2) years.

12 (b) A public member shall be a member of the general public.

13 (c) A public member shall not hold another state or local office and shall not receive nor  
14 have received within the previous five (5) years any income directly or indirectly from an electric,  
15 gas, or oil company or from an energy facility developer.

16 (d) If a public member recuses or withdraws from a proceeding for any reason, a substitute  
17 member shall be appointed in accordance with this section.

18 **42-98-5.2. Hearing officers.**

19 (a) The board may appoint a hearing officer to conduct hearings related to a major non-  
20 generating facility. Hearing officers shall not be appointed to conduct hearings related to a major  
21 generating facility.

22 (b) A hearing officer shall be an attorney licensed to practice law in this state with  
23 experience in regulatory matters dealing with energy production and/or transmission.

24 (c) A hearing officer shall be reasonably compensated by the board for their services to the  
25 board, either through contract or, if the hearing officer is a state employee, through a transfer to the  
26 state agency or department by whom the attorney is normally employed.

27 (d) Following the completion of the hearing, the hearing officer shall file their findings and  
28 recommended decision in writing with the board. Upon review of the findings and  
29 recommendations, the board may accept, reject, or modify, in whole or in part, the hearing officer's  
30 findings and recommended decision. Subsequent to the board's review and formal decision, the  
31 provider may submit a written brief to the board if the energy provider has a negative impact due  
32 to the hearing officer's findings. The hearing officer's findings and recommended decision shall  
33 become effective and shall have the same force and effect as a decision of the board. If the board  
34 rejects or modifies the hearing officer's findings or recommended decision, then the board shall

1 decide the matter independently and issue an order of the board with its findings and decision.

2 (e) No hearing officer shall be assigned to a hearing relating to a project or proposed project  
3 by an applicant from whom they have directly or indirectly received compensation in the last five  
4 (5) years.

5 (f) The board shall establish within two (2) months of the effective date of this section and  
6 maintain, at least on a biennial basis, a list of qualified hearing officers, the number of which the  
7 board shall set and select as needed.

8 (g) The list shall be composed with an equal number of officers with primary professional  
9 experience as advocates for government and an equal number of officers with primary professional  
10 experience as advocates for the private sector.

11 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- ENERGY FACILITY SITING  
ACT

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1           This act would recognize that a host community for a proposed or existing major generating  
2 facility is uniquely affected by the facility siting process. The act would also increase the  
3 membership of the siting board from three (3) to five (5) members and would mandate inclusion  
4 and participation of the host community of the facility as well as the public in the affected cities  
5 and towns. This act would spell out requirements for hearing officers and public members of the  
6 board.

7           This act would take effect upon passage.

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