

2018 -- S 2509

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

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SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING THE RHODE ISLAND SENATE COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC AND  
CLIMATE BENEFITS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

Introduced By: Senators Calkin, Seveney, Conley, Sosnowski, and Miller

Date Introduced: March 01, 2018

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

1           WHEREAS, The effects of climate change on the State of Rhode Island are real,  
2 measurable and publicly recognized; including a rising sea level measured ten and six-tenths  
3 inches (10.6") since 1930 at the Newport Tide Gauge; thirty percent (30%) more intense storms  
4 driving worsening floods; measurably longer and hotter summers and heat waves; and  
5 increasingly damaging coastal storms and sea surge; and

6           WHEREAS, Rhode Island faces significant economic risks from flooding and sea rise  
7 because of its size and its coastal assets, exposure and its intricate web of inland rivers and  
8 streams; damage to its publicly and privately owned coastal properties, businesses and  
9 infrastructure from rising sea levels and increased storm surge, business interruption, property  
10 devaluation, lost tax revenue to the municipalities and the state and climate-driven changes on  
11 labor productivity and public health; and harm to its marine industries, real estate industry and  
12 tourism which are three of Rhode Island's biggest economic drivers; and

13           WHEREAS, The effects of climate change are projected to grow more severe with each  
14 passing year causing ever greater damage and harm; and

15           WHEREAS, World governments are working on mitigating the harmful environmental  
16 and economic effects of climate change through the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions  
17 as established in the Paris Agreement; and

18           WHEREAS, Renewable energy offers economically feasible ways to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>  
19 emissions; and

1           WHEREAS, To date, there has been no comprehensive assessment of how to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>  
2 emissions with renewable energy in Rhode Island; and

3           WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Energy Efficiency and Resources Management Council is  
4 charged with developing and recommending for implementation plans, programs and standards  
5 for energy conservation, energy efficiency, and diversification of energy resources; promoting the  
6 development of eligible renewable energy resources for Rhode Island; and monitoring and  
7 evaluating the effectiveness of programs to achieve energy efficiency, energy conservation, and  
8 diversification of energy resources; and

9           WHEREAS, The Distributed-Generation Board guides The Renewable Energy Growth  
10 Program which was established with the purpose of continuing the development of renewable-  
11 energy distributed generation in the load zone of the electric distribution company at reasonable  
12 cost; and

13           WHEREAS, Rhode Island's business community and the public sector are partners in  
14 moving the economy forward and each play an active role in helping to determine how best to  
15 assess the economic opportunities of renewable energy, and how to formulate a plan that moves  
16 Rhode Island forward in a sustainable, affordable direction; now, therefore be it

17           RESOLVED, That the special legislative commission to be known as the "Rhode Island  
18 Senate Commission on Economic and Climate Benefits of Renewable Energy" be and the same is  
19 hereby created consisting of twenty-one (21) members: eighteen (18) of whom shall be voting  
20 members, of whom eleven (11) shall be voting members of the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency  
21 and Resources Management Council, and seven (7) shall be voting members of The Distributed-  
22 Generation Board; and three (3) of whom shall be non-voting members from The Distributed-  
23 Generation Board, one of whom shall be a representative of an electric distribution company, one  
24 of whom shall be the Commissioner of the Office of Energy Resources, or designee, and one of  
25 whom shall be a representative of the commerce corporation, all of whom shall be ex officio  
26 members of the commission.

27           Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
28 the call of the Senate President who shall appoint one person to be chairperson of the board and  
29 one person to be vice chairperson of the board from the eighteen (18) voting members; and the  
30 Commissioner of the Office of Energy Resources shall be the Executive Secretary and Executive  
31 Director of the commission.

32           In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory  
33 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly  
34 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu

1 of a legislator, provided that the majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which  
2 is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general public.

3 The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study to assess the  
4 development, use and economic benefits of renewable energy in Rhode Island and report to the  
5 Senate, including but not limited to:

6 (1) Identify all Rhode Island industries that require high-heat manufacturing processes  
7 that cannot be achieved with renewable energy and all other uses that require high-energy fuels  
8 such as aviation. Identify all remaining uses of energy in Rhode Island. Identify all reasonable  
9 energy conservation and efficiencies that can be achieved, including the efficiencies achieved by  
10 a smart grid. Calculate the renewable energy capacity that would be needed to meet Rhode  
11 Island's energy needs, excluding high-heat manufacturing processes and high-energy fuels, if all  
12 remaining needs could be fulfilled by electricity and if all reasonable energy conservation and  
13 efficiencies were achieved, including the efficiencies achieved by a smart grid;

14 (2) Develop a ten (10) year plan and a twenty (20) year plan to build a smart grid and the  
15 renewable energy capacity to meet Rhode Island's energy needs, excluding high-heat  
16 manufacturing processes and high-energy fuel and considering all possible renewable energy  
17 sources; and

18 (3) Assess the costs, projected profits and savings, and economic benefits of building a  
19 smart grid and the renewable energy capacity to meet Rhode Island's energy needs, excluding  
20 high-heat manufacturing processes and high-energy fuels, in ten (10) years and in twenty (20)  
21 years.

22 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.  
23 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

24 All departments and agencies of the state, shall furnish such advice and information,  
25 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
26 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

27 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
28 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the  
30 Senate no later than January 2, 2019, and said commission shall expire on January 3, 2019.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
SENATE RESOLUTION  
CREATING THE RHODE ISLAND SENATE COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC AND  
CLIMATE BENEFITS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

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1           This resolution would create a twenty-one (21) member special legislative study  
2   commission whose purpose it would be to study and make recommendations concerning the  
3   development, use and economic benefits of renewable energy in Rhode Island, and who would  
4   report back to the Senate no later than January 2, 2019, and whose life would expire on January 3,  
5   2019.

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