

Sweeney, Smith: Federal Sale of Offshore Leases Shows Need for NJ To Move on Offshore Wind

TRENTON – With 13 companies poised to bid on offshore wind leases off the Jersey Shore, Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) and Senate Environment and Energy Committee Chairman Bob Smith (D-Middlesex) today urged the state Board of Public Utilities to quickly adopt regulations to make New Jersey's offshore wind industry a reality.

"With the federal Bureau of Offshore Energy Management putting 344,000 acres off the Jersey Shore up for bid by qualified firms, New Jersey has the opportunity to move into the forefront of the wind energy industry on the Atlantic Seaboard," Senator Sweeney said.

Sweeney noted that construction has already started on offshore wind turbines off the coast of Block Island in Rhode Island. "New Jersey's 127 miles of coastline and advantageous winds give New Jersey a competitive edge we should capitalize upon to bring jobs and clean energy to our state," the Senate President said.

Senator Smith noted that it has been five years since the Governor signed the Offshore Wind Economic Development Act, and urged the Board of Public Utilities to move quickly to write regulations allowing the provision of wind energy tax credits as authorized by the law, which Sweeney sponsored.

"During BPU President Rick Mroz's confirmation hearing, he committed the BPU to hiring a consultant to help finalize the long-delayed wind energy regulation," Smith said. "It is inexcusable that the BPU has twice rejected applications by Fishermen's Energy to build the first five turbines off the coast of Atlantic City, a project that has both strong local support and the backing of environmentalists across the state."

The BOEM said the area included in the November 9 lease sales could produce more than 3,400 megawatts of energy for New Jersey – the equivalent of at least three fossil-fuel burning plants, or five times the energy produced by the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant – which makes offshore wind an attractive option for states developing plans to shift to clean energy to achieve the targets in the Clean Power Plan finalized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in early August.