

Renewable Energy Legislative Developments in Illinois: Offshore Wind Energy and Renewable Energy Production Districts

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On August 8, 2011, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed into law two bills that affect renewable energy projects in Illinois. The first, [Public Act 097-0266](#), requires the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to prepare a report that evaluates offshore wind energy projects in Lake Michigan. The report will provide recommendations for necessary legislation and regulations regarding offshore wind development, and set forth appropriate criteria for the approval of offshore wind energy projects. The law also creates a Lake Michigan Offshore Wind Energy Advisory Council as a separate entity within the IDNR. The Council will advise the IDNR in its preparation of the report and consist of members from various regulatory agencies including IDNR, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Power Agency, the Illinois Commerce Commission, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Council will also include public members from relevant organizations such as tourism, wind, electrical, environmental and recreational organizations.

The other law, [Public Act 097-0265](#), will allow areas within a county to be designated as renewable energy production districts. This designation will authorize a county to construct and operate a renewable energy facility within the county. Eligible renewable energy sources include solar, wind, and hydroelectric energy; crops grown for electricity generation, anaerobic digestion of livestock or food processing waste; and fuel cells or micro-turbines powered by renewable fuels. The county would be able to contract with private or public entities for the construction and operation of the facility, solicit funds for the facility, and sell the renewable energy produced. Designation of a renewable energy production district can be put up for a county-wide vote if 50 or more legal voters (or a majority if there are fewer than 100 legal voters) file a petition in state court for a local referendum on the matter.

1 Min Read

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