



ML Strategies Update

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Energy & Environment Update

ENERGY AND CLIMATE DEBATE

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chair Sen. Murkowski (R-AK) and ranking member Sen. Cantwell (D-WA) remain optimistic that the Senate bipartisan energy bill will advance perhaps as early as this week, after the Senate completes work on legislation related to GMOs, but more likely after the Senate returns from next week's recess. However, they will first need to overcome the hold placed on the bill by Sen. Lee (R-UT) over the compromise legislation to address the Flint water crisis, as well as a hold placed by Sen. Nelson (D-FL) who is insisting that an amendment offered by Sen. Cassidy (R-LA) that expands offshore drilling revenue sharing be removed from the list of amendments.

Negotiations are also continuing on reconciling the House- and Senate-passed Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) reform bills, with reports that after exchanging in writing proposals for how to address differences, key decision-makers are now meeting face to face.

Yesterday, House Budget Committee Chairman Price (R-GA) unveiled the Republican's \$3.9 billion [budget resolution](#), which is drawing critics from the left and the right with Democrats arguing that it cuts spending too much and conservative Republicans arguing that it doesn't cut enough. The budget resolution is set to be marked up today, but it is unclear whether it will gain traction in the full House. Top-line spending numbers for Fiscal Year 2017 were already agreed to in last year's budget agreement so the new budget resolution is primarily about messaging. The proposed House budget resolution rescinds unobligated balances from stimulus green energy programs, and would reduce funding for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Legislation focused on Environmental Protection Agency standards for the reduction of ozone pollution and the impact of the standards on the states is expected to be introduced this week, with a hearing as early as April.

CONGRESS

Hearings

On March 15 the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to conduct oversight on the Presidential Memorandum on "Mitigating Impacts on Natural Resources from Development and Encouraging Related Private Investment."

On March 15 the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a hearing on the budget for the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management.

On March 16 the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Interior and Subcommittee on Health Care, Benefits, and Administrative Rules holds a hearing on "Examining the Renewable Fuel Standard."

House Approves Energy-Related Bills

The House of Representatives on March 14 unanimously approved several energy bills including: the Energy Efficient Government Technology Act, which would increase energy efficiency at federal data centers; the Fair RATES Act, which would amend the Federal Power Act to provide opportunities for rehearing of orders affecting rates; a bill to amend the Federal Power Act to expressly include a minimum monetary threshold for mergers and acquisitions of facilities subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

House Subcommittee Advances Pipeline Safety Legislation

On March 16 the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power approved by voice vote the [discussion draft](#) of the Pipeline Safety Act of 2016.

Safe Climate Caucus Adds New Members

The Congressional [Safe Climate Caucus](#) announced the addition of nine new members including Reps. Esty (D-CT), Cicilline (D-RI), Nolan (D-MN), Kildee (D-MI), Hahn (D-CA), Keating (D-MA), Davis (D-CA), Engel (D-NY), and Grayson (D-FL), bringing the total membership to 60.

House Republican Energy, Innovation, and Environmental Working Group

A new coalition has been formed by moderate House Republicans to support market-based reforms to promote clean energy protect the environment. The House Republican Energy, Innovation, and Environmental Working Group has twelve members so far including Reps. Kinzinger (R-IL), Comstock (R-VA), Heck (R-NV), Gibson (R-NY), Costello (R-PA), Yoder (R-KS), Hanna (R-NY), Reichert (R-WA), Stefanik (R-NY), Curbelo (R-FL), Reed (R-NY), and Dold (R-IL).

ADMINISTRATION

President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau Announce Climate Initiatives

President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to protect the Arctic through a series of initiatives that cover more than 10 percent of marine areas, promote shipping corridors with low environmental impact, and establish offshore oil and gas leasing areas. Both heads of state also pledged to reduce methane emissions from oil and gas by 40 percent by 2025. A statement from the White House can be found [here](#).

White House Threatens Veto of SENSE Act

On March 14, the White House issued a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) (SAP) on H.R. 3797, the Satisfying Energy Needs and Saving the Environment (SENSE) Act, stating that the Administration strongly opposes the legislation and that if the President were presented with the legislation his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

Administration to Block Drilling in the Atlantic

The Administration has announced that it will not allow oil and gas leasing in the Atlantic Ocean, a reversal from the Administration's previous proposal to open up certain areas off the coasts of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia to drilling. The [2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program](#) was released on March 15.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DOE Innovative Small Business Vouchers Pilot Program

The DOE [announced](#) March 10 that 33 small businesses have been selected to work directly with DOE national labs to accelerate the transformation toward a clean energy economy. The selected businesses will be given access to lab resources to help move innovative ideas and technologies to the marketplace.

Energy Department Announces \$25 Million for Electric Motor Research

On March 11, the DOE [announced \\$25 million in funding](#) for developing energy-efficient electric motors through applied research and development. Eight to twelve projects will be selected through the Next Generation of Electric Machines: Enabling Technologies program within the Office of Energy Efficiency's Renewable Energy's Advanced Manufacturing Office.

Denver Selected for 2017 Solar Decathlon

Also on March 11, DOE's Under Secretary for Science and Energy, Dr. Franklin Orr, joined Mayor Michael Hancock to [announce](#) Denver as the host city for the next U.S. DOE Solar Decathlon competition in the fall of 2017. Sixteen teams will compete in 10 contests, ranging from architecture and engineering to home appliance performance.

DOE Energy Efficiency Rule for Commercial Boilers

DOE is proposing a new rule setting higher energy efficiency standards for commercial package boilers used to heat businesses according to a [pre-publication version](#) of the rule released by the agency March 11.

DOE Proposing New Rule for Ceiling Fan Energy Efficiency

The DOE published in the [Federal Register](#) on March 15 an extension of the comment period for its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for ceiling fans energy conservation standards. The comment period is extended to April 14, 2016.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

EPA Plans to Regulate Existing Oil and Gas Sources

The White House announced on March 10 that the EPA [will regulate methane emissions](#) from existing sources of oil and gas. Environmentalists have long pushed for regulating existing sources of methane. The planned regulations will help the United States meet its emission commitments under the Paris climate agreement.

EPA To Convene Meetings on Quadrennial Energy Review

The U.S. Department of Energy will convene public meetings to solicit input for the second installment of the Quadrennial Energy Review (QER). The Review [will be an integrated study](#) of the electricity system from generation to end-use. Meetings will be held in Atlantic, GA; Boston, MA; Salt Lake City, UT; Des Moines, IA; Los Angeles, CA; and Austin, TX.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

USFWS Proposes New Wind Farm Rule for Eagles

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on March 8 sent to the Office of Management and Budget a

new rule that would regulate the timeframe for how long wind turbines would be allowed to unintentionally injure or kill eagles. The new rule comes on the heels of a previous version that was deemed by a federal judge to be in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

INTERNATIONAL

E.U. Renewable Energy Consumption Grows 2 Percent

Renewable electricity consumption [grew by 2 percentage points](#) in the European Union, to 28.1 percent of total energy consumption in 2014. The growth, though, reflects a drop in overall power consumption rather than a major expansion in renewable energy.

Court Rules Canada Unable to Join Case on U.S. Duties on Chinese Solar Panels

On March 14, the Court of International Trade ruled that Canada cannot participate in litigation that challenges countervailing duties imposed by the United States on solar panels from China. The case is brought by Chinese plaintiffs is challenging the U.S. Department of Commerce's calculation of the duties, and Canada argued that the outcome could impact the legal rationale for duties of a similar nature on Canadian supercalendered paper.

Global Emissions Decoupling from Economic Growth

The International Energy Agency (IEA) [announced](#) March 16 that greenhouse gas emissions are decoupling from economic growth, with global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions remaining flat for the second year in a row.

STATES

Wyoming Wind Farm Receives Approval for First 500 Turbines

On March 9, the Obama administration gave [preliminary approval](#) for the first 500 turbines in a Wyoming project, which is projected to become one of the world's largest wind farms. The Bureau of Land Management published an environmental assessment and draft finding of no significant impact for the first 500 turbines. The Chokecherry and Sierra Madra Wind Energy Project expects to tie together 1,000 turbines across 220,000 acres and produce 3,000 megawatts, which could power nearly a million homes.

RGGI GGH Auction Sees Price Decrease

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) held an [auction](#) March 9 of carbon allowances. Ending a five-year period of price increases, the auction saw prices fall to \$5.25 per each allowance after a high of \$7.50 last December.

New Hampshire House Votes to Raise Solar Rooftop Meter Cap

On March 10, the New Hampshire House of Representatives voted to raise the state's cap on rooftop solar net metering production. The bill raises the cap from 50 to 100 megawatts, blocks any entity from taking more than 20 percent of the participation queue, and directs the utility commission to study rooftop solar systems.

Maine Legislature to Consider Solar Net Metering

A proposal to end solar net metering and replace it with utility administered long-term contracts will be taken up by the Maine legislature's Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology on March 16. The proposal would cover up to 248 megawatts of new residential, community and large scale solar generation for the next five years.

New Jersey Senate Approves Renewables Target

On March 14, the New Jersey Senate approved legislation that requires the state's utilities to purchase 80-percent of their power from renewable sources by 2050.

SUSTAINABILITY

Whole Foods Signs Deal with SolarCity on Solar Panels

Whole Foods Markets signed a deal with [NRG Energy](#) and SolarCity to place solar systems atop 100 of its stores. Whole Foods hopes to use solar power to reduce its use of utility-generated electricity and decrease the costs of its energy consumption.

U.S. Solar Installations Expected to Double

Research shows that U.S. solar installations are [forecast](#) to double by the end of 2016. Federal and state tax credit and falling equipment prices are fueling the building boom. The cost of panels in particular has declined by 67 percent since 2010.

Con Ed Aims to Revamp Its Customer Service

Con Edison will start sending customers in New York personalized reports about their energy use along with product recommendations. The effort aims to modernize the utility's relationship with customers and lower energy bills.

EPA 2016 Climate Leadership Award Winners

EPA on March 9 announced the [2016 Climate Leadership Award](#) winners. One individual, 13 organizations, and three partnerships were recognized for their leadership in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate actions.

EPA Honors Southern California Government Partners for Leadership

EPA on March 14 [awarded](#) the County of Los Angeles, the Western Riverside Council of Governments, and the San Bernardino Associated Governments 2016 Innovative Partnerships Certificates for their efforts to increase the mass adoption of home energy and water efficiency across California.

MISCELLANEOUS

Launch of Low-Income Solar Policy Guide

On March 15, Reps. Ellison (D-MN), Lee (D-CA), and Cardenas (D-CA) joined President Obama's deputy assistant for energy and climate Dan Utech to launch a new [Low-Income Solar Policy Guide](#) which is intended to empower consumers with incomes below 80-percent of their regional median income and residents of affordable housing units' access solar power.

Report on Cost of Massachusetts Offshore Wind

The University of Delaware's Special Initiative on Offshore Wind released a [report](#) March 15 on "Future Cost of Offshore Wind in Massachusetts." The report finds that previously projected costs for offshore wind in MA can be lowered by as much as 54-percent with the development of offshore wind at a scale of 2,000 MW.

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