

To: Senator Rob Bradley, Florida Senate's Committee on Environmental preservation and Conservation Vice Chair

A. Renewable Energy Standards (RES) for Florida

B. Executive Summary

In the election held last August, Floridians let it be known that they are for renewable energy sources. They shot down the deceptive amendment one that was put forth by utility companies, and voted immensely in favor of amendment four. This amendment authorized the Florida Legislature to amend the Florida Constitution to provide property tax exemptions for Florida businesses and residents who have solar energy installed on their property. This is a great step toward the sunshine state becoming a cleaner energy user, but there are still not clear goals set by the state legislature in this regard.

Florida is the third most populated state in the US and has one of the strongest tourism industries which means there are countless visitors to the state. This grand amount of people leads Florida to consume a lot of energy. With so much energy being consumed in Florida it begs the question why Florida is not one of the 29 states that has put forth Renewable Energy Standards (RES), also known as renewable portfolio standards, that requires utility companies to have a certain percentage of their outgoing energy to be source from renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, or hydroelectric power. The Florida Legislature should put forth an RES which states that Florida utility companies will together source at least 2% more kilowatt hours of their retail electric sales from renewable energy sources each year for the next 20 years.

C. Context and Importance of the Problem

Florida is the third most populated state in the US with 18.8 million residents. Floridians who own homes or businesses have the ability to generate and use as much renewable energy as like by installing such mechanisms themselves, but many chose the easy of using the energy provided by the utility companies. Florida is also one of the most visited places in the world. In 2016 alone Florida had 112.8 million tourists. These tourists rely on the energy provided by the utility companies at hotels they stay, restaurants they eat, and attractions they visit. These visitors don't have a choice whether or not the energy they use is renewable. With an RES put in place, like 29 other states have put in place, the utility companies our visitors rely on and residents most chose use to utilize will increasingly source their energy from renewables instead of non-renewable energy sources.

Home or business owners that independently use renewable energy for electricity in their homes or businesses should be free to continue doing so. These Floridians have chosen not to utilize the utility companies; therefore, their usage of renewable energy is not problematic and should not be considered in the RES.

D. Critique of policy options

The problem to be dealt with is that Florida currently does not have goals, standards, or policies put in place to increase the usage of renewable energy sources. The

passage of amendment four in the past election made it easier, through tax exemption, for those who choose to produce renewable energy themselves to do so, but this does not impact the majority of Floridians and Florida's visitor. Although Floridians have the ability to install solar panels, most will find it easier to rely on utility companies. This includes business owners that cater to tourists. The issue lies in that the utility companies are not regulated to source their energy retail sales from renewable energy sources.

E. My Recommendations

Because tourism is Florida's number one industry, and because permanent Florida residents will find it easy to source their electricity from the utility companies, Florida should follow the example of the 29 other states that have implemented Renewable Energy Standards. The Florida Legislature should put forth an RES policy which states that Florida utility companies together will source at least 2% more kilowatt hours of their retail electric sales from renewable energy sources each year for the next 20 years. Meaning that the first year the utility companies are to source 2% of their energy sales measured in kilowatt hours from renewable sources, the next year 4%, then 6%, etc. until the companies are sourcing at least 40% of their sales from renewable sources. This allows for renewable energy production technologies to continue, and the utility companies to use such technologies. This policy should not limit the tax exemptions given to citizens who chose to generate their own electricity, or burden such Floridians in anyway. This policy should simply make it easier for Floridians and Florida's visitors to use cleaner energy sources.

F. Sources

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/travel/os-bz-visit-florida-tourism-2016-story.html>
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/renewable-portfolio-standards.aspx>
<http://www.seia.org/policy/renewable-energy-deployment/renewable-energy-standards>
<https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/EP/>
<https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/florida/howwework/florida-amendment-4.xml?redirect=https-301>