



GrowJobsCT

MANUFACTURING MAKES CT'S FUTURE

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Remarks of John Harrity
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Review of Long-Term Renewable Energy Contracts

Chairman Downes, members of the Commission, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the Energy Independence Act.

My name is John Harrity. I serve as Director of GrowJobsCT – a coalition of business, labor and community groups, along with elected officials, whose goal is to preserve and promote manufacturing jobs in the state of Connecticut. I am also a representative of the International Association of Machinists, which represents thousands of manufacturing workers in the state of Connecticut, including the hourly workers at UT Fuel Cells.

As Director of GrowJobsCT, I am proud of the fact that we are a founding member of the Connecticut Hydrogen-Fuel Cell Coalition, which brings together stakeholders in this innovative industry, one where Connecticut currently leads the nation in the concentration of fuel cell companies within its borders.

I am also proud of the fact that GrowJobsCT worked hard to convince legislators last year to include language in the Energy Independence Act to allow special benefits for fuel cells manufactured principally in Connecticut, as well as stipulating that renewable energy projects be located in Connecticut.

Why did we fight for that language? Because this state is in the midst of a crisis and has before it a significant opportunity to help alleviate that crisis through smart public policy.

When I make that statement, you – as members of the Department of Public Utilities Control – might instinctively think: “**Energy.**” The crisis that I refer to, however, is that of “**Jobs.**”

What we were able to convince the legislature, and what I hope to convey to you, is that Connecticut in fact faces a number of overlapping challenges. To the extent that we can find solutions that overlap as well, we are being smart, and the state will work its way to a better footing. But if we continue to see issues as “competing” and wrangle over bureaucratic turf – our state will continue to lose.

You have all seen the data on jobs. Connecticut is ranked dead last in the nation in job growth. Young people, especially those with advanced education, are leaving at a rate higher than any other state but Alaska. In manufacturing, we have lost 108,000 jobs – one-third of all Connecticut manufacturing jobs – in the last 15 years. According to polls, this is the number one issue concerning Connecticut residents

That is why the fuel cell industry is so critically important to the state’s future. Not just Connecticut, but the entire country and in fact the whole world are facing an energy crisis that

demands new and innovative answers. For the past 60 years, our state has had the unique distinction to be the incubator for fuel cells – a technology widely seen as one of the most promising alternatives for power production.

Its moment has arrived. But with that has arrived a host of suitors – proposals, projects and programs from at least a dozen states willing to invest lots of money and attention into fuel cell companies willing to relocate from Connecticut. What are these suitors trying to do? Simple. They want to combine economic development, job creation and alternative energy production. What they fervently hope is that Connecticut will not make those connections – that we will continue with the same strategies that brought us to 50th in the nation in job growth.

The same can be said about locating renewable energy projects in Connecticut. When our state is actually losing population due to a lack of good jobs, it is simply smart public policy to combine initiatives – energy, environment and employment – in a mutually beneficial way. Buying wind from Wyoming (or wherever) may be cheaper in the short run. But it's a false economy, that misses the perfect opportunity to use our resources in a way that stimulates the economy by boosting employment.

Section 26 of the Energy Independence Act represented a dramatic change. The legislature understood the links between energy, environment, economic development and job growth – and framed the legislation to address all four.

That's why the legislature passed the legislation they did. They acted on behalf of the people of the state, by whom they were elected.

So it's especially disconcerting to have state agency – in this case the Office of Consumer Counsel – holding themselves above our elected representatives, and threatening to bring suit over legislation that helps create jobs. In fact, it's outrageous. Their time to weigh in on the matter was when the legislation was pending. They did so. The legislators considered the position of the OCC, and then took action.

The prospect that a state agency and state money might be used to pursue a court case to block job growth and support for a vital state industry – would be laughable if we were not in a crisis. But we are.

The argument that some aspects of Section 26 may not be the cheapest way to purchase clean energy is penny wise and pound foolish. I am certain that some functions of the Office of Consumer Counsel might be done more cheaply in India. But in that situation, I am sure the OCC would clearly see other values than just the sticker price – and rightly so.

We hope that the DPUC has the same kind of deeper understanding in this matter – seeing the broader picture of the state's challenges and opportunities. We would hope also that the DPUC would honor the democratic process, and the will of the people, as expressed in the Energy Independence Act. Finally, we would hope that the DPUC, and all state agencies involved in this process, would work vigorously to cut through bureaucracy and red tape and actually get these projects moving for the good of the state.

Thank you.