



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 1, 2011

N.H. House Votes to Repeal Greenhouse Gas Law

The House debated the issue and voted to repeal RGGI by roughly the same margin (246 to 104) in a preliminary vote on February 23. The bill went to the House Finance Committee before coming back for final approval. It must now be passed by the state Senate, which like the House, has a Republican supermajority. Even if the bill is vetoed by Gov. John Lynch, a Democrat who supported New Hampshire's joining the compact three years ago, it appears likely the veto will be overridden.



Under the current law, the cost of purchasing the emission credits would be passed on to electricity consumers, an expense that takes money out of the pockets of residential consumers and adds to the cost of doing business in New Hampshire, said Speaker of the House William O'Brien.

"Repealing RGGI puts more money in the pockets of New Hampshire citizens through lower electric bills," the Mont Vernon Republican said in a statement released from the Speaker's office after Wednesday's vote. "Eliminating RGGI sends a clear signal to the business community that we are reversing the state's direction [and moving] toward a pro-business regulatory environment. New Hampshire is open for business and ready to work with employers to help grow our economy and create good, new jobs. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative has always been a backdoor tax increase on the citizens of New Hampshire and we need to end it and bring in jobs."

But opponents of repeal argued during the hour-long debate by the 400-member House in February that the program is both reducing carbon emissions and saving ratepayers money by providing an incentive for companies to invest in more modern and efficient means of producing energy. Democrat Beatriz Pastor of Lyme referred to a study done by Carbon Solutions New England that showed the program was a success in its first year. "Residents and businesses saved \$1.5 million in energy costs and reduced CO₂ emissions by 4,600 metric tons," she said. The same study showed RGGI in its second year saved \$4.2 million in energy costs and reduced carbon emissions by 13,200 tons.

Democrat Naida Kaen of Lee argued that her colleagues were rushing into a decision without an understanding of its consequences, especially the new members of the House who were elected for the first time last November. The bill received only one public hearing and little discussion in committee, she said. "What's the rush?" she asked during the February debate. "Is someone holding a gun to our heads forcing us to jump off a cliff? Because that's what we are doing, we are jumping off a cliff without knowing what the consequences are." She recommended at the time that the bill be sent back to the Science Technology and Energy Committee.

But the chairman of that committee insisted that the program should never have been adopted. "RGGI



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should be repealed because we never should have joined in the first place," declared Jim Garrity (R-Atkinson). He explained that its passage three years ago was based on "shaky climate science, namely [that] the global apocalypse was coming and RGGI would help stop it."

Hudson Republican Shawn Jasper did not like the fact that money from the sale of carbon credits would go to finance clean energy projects of private companies, an arrangement he likened to having the government pick winners and losers. Just before voting in February, he raised the following procedural "question": "Mr. Speaker, if I know that what is really behind RGGI is in fact the money and if I am not in favor of redistributing the wealth, would I now push the green button and vote 'yes' to adopt the committee report?" Pushing the green button was a "yes" vote for repeal of RGGI.

Photo: New Hampshire state capitol

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