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ELECTRIC BILLS TO SEE MORE WORK

A package of bills to again restructure the state's electric market and to require that utilities use renewable energy was supposed to move to the House floor Wednesday. But House Energy and Technology Committee Chair Rep. Frank Accavitti (D-Eastpointe) cancelled the meeting Tuesday to allow for additional negotiations.

Mr. Accavitti told Gongwer News Service that workgroups had been working on pieces of the package over the past several months, but various parties had been arguing recently that they could accept provisions in pieces in one workgroup if they could get changes to pieces in another.

"Rather than continually negotiating and shuttling back and forth between workgroups, I'm going to get everyone together," he said.

The omnibus workgroups are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday next week, with the package then scheduled to be reported the following Wednesday.

POLL: At the same time Wednesday's committee was being cancelled, the Customer Choice Coalition announced results of a poll showing Michigan residents want to retain the ability to choose their electric supplier.

The poll, by Marketing Resource Group, showed 74 percent of residents say they should be allowed to choose an electric generator other than their local utility, while 15 percent said customers should only have service from the utility. And 77 percent would support legislation that would allow more residential customer choice.

"Voters understand this issue. They know competition is better than a monopoly when it comes to meeting their electricity needs. Lawmakers should take this into account when considering House Bill 5524 in the days and weeks ahead," said Barry Cargill, executive director of the Customer Choice Coalition.

Legislators this week also received letters from a new group, COMPETE, urging that they vote against changes that would limit customer choice. Among the members of the new coalition is Haworth, Macy's and Morley Stanwood Community Schools.

The Michigan League of Conservation Voters, however, decried the committee cancellation as a failure by the House to act on improving the state's environment.

"On the same day that organizations across the state have come together to call on Governor Granholm to lower CO2 emissions in Michigan, the State Legislature has once again stalled in their efforts to move Michigan onto the path of a new energy future," said Brian Beauchamp, League campaign director. "It is disappointing that the Michigan

Legislature is once again punting on an opportunity to move Michigan towards a clean energy future. Passing these bills would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect the Great Lakes, create new jobs and add billions of dollars to the economy, bringing Michigan into the 21st century."