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Granholm: Jobs lost without energy law

Bills would require electricity to come from wind power

David Eggert
Associated Press

Michigan is losing jobs every day that it fails to pass a law requiring that some of the state's electricity come from wind and renewable sources, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said Tuesday.

"We need to get this done and get it done now," the Democratic governor told reporters. "The urgency of this cannot be overstated."

Granholm wants the Legislature to pass bills in March requiring that 10 percent of electricity be from renewable resources by the end of 2015. She said at least two dozen states have such a standard and are attracting the jobs Michigan needs.

"This ought to be through both (the House and Senate) in March. If it's not, something is wrong," she said.

The governor stressed she is encouraged by the Legislature's work on the issue. But she also warned that a major multinational wind manufacturer that may bring up to five plants to Michigan to build turbine components could look elsewhere if the renewable energy portfolio, or RPS, is not passed.

The RPS has been bogged down because it is a complex issue, not everyone is convinced a mandate is needed to attract jobs and it is tied to rewriting a 2000 state law that opened major utilities Detroit Edison, which is a unit of DTE Energy Co., and Consumers Energy, a subsidiary of CMS Energy Corp., to competition.

Granholm said she would prefer lawmakers pass a comprehensive energy plan linking the issues.

An energy package is expected to pass the Democratic-led House in March, but the Republican-controlled Senate will take more time - dealing with renewable standards in March and waiting until as late as June on the more controversial issue of electric choice.

"We're trying to use a deliberative process. This is an extraordinarily complex arena," said Sen.

Renewing energy

Gov. Jennifer Granholm wants the state Legislature to require that more of Michigan's electricity come from wind, solar and other renewable sources. Some facts about the issue:

- At least 25 states have a renewable portfolio standard, or RPS.
- Proposed legislation would require that 10 percent of Michigan's power come from renewable energy by the end of 2015.
- Granholm says an RPS would give businesses the certainty they need before building wind farms in Michigan and attracting thousands of jobs.
- Some lawmakers would rather create incentives for more green energy to be used, opposing mandates.
- Granholm wants the Legislature to act in March. But it is unclear if a final deal can be reached soon because the issue is tied to controversial efforts to rewrite the law opening up monopoly utilities to competition in 2000.

Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, who chairs the Senate Energy Policy and Public Utilities Committee.
"We're not purposely dragging this out. There's a lot of moving pieces in this thing."

For now, Republicans do not want to make renewable power mandatory. They would rather provide incentives for power providers to increase their share of power from green sources.

At some point, Michigan will need more power. Utilities say they must have legislative changes before they build multibillion-dollar power plants - either coal-fired or nuclear plants - whose costs would be passed onto customers. They argue that, without laws limiting how many of their customers could look to other energy sources, they would not be able to get the loans they need to build the new plants.

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