

MIRS Newsletter

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Gov Beams Energy At Bill Signing

(EATON RAPIDS) -- Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) signed today a three-bill alternative energy package, which she heralded as having "the greatest potential to transform the state" of any piece of legislation she had signed in her six years as chief executive.

During a pair of public signings in Detroit and Eaton Rapids, the Governor focused almost entirely on the job-creating potential of the alternative energy aspect of the broad-sweeping legislation. The new law requires that 10 percent of the state's energy come from renewable sources by 2015, a number that alternative energy experts acknowledge could be reached today with some investment in wind energy.

Granholt told around 200 workers at the wind turbine manufacturing plant in Eaton Rapids that she would have preferred to see renewable portfolio standards that looked more like 20 or 25 percent by 2020, but that a step toward alternative energy needed to be made and she would continue to push for more.

The package (SB 213, [SB 1048](#) and [HB 5524](#)) also included what Marty **KUSHLER** of the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy called a fairly aggressive energy efficiency program and a 10 percent cap on the percentage of the electric market that can be controlled by competitive energy suppliers.

The final piece was criticized as a full-front attack on the state's electric choice law and a gift for the state's two largest utilities -- DTE Energy and Consumers Energy. The Customer Choice Coalition questioned today whether the new legislation would prod either electric giant to break ground on any renewable energy project or whether the companies would "game the system" by simply building the new coal and nuclear power plant they'd already announced.

But supporters argue DTE and Consumers needed certainty in the market before they would be willing to pluck down billions of dollars on new generation.

"This is about job-creation in Michigan," Granholt said. "We had to have a stable energy base in this state."

For the Governor the focus was clearly on the clean energy aspect of the legislation. In her public statements, she did not use the 400,000 jobs number that she had tossed around earlier this year. Instead, she made a pledge that the package would create "tens of thousands of new energy jobs," which energy experts told *MIRS* last week was a more realistic expectation (See "[400,000 Alternative Energy Jobs? It's In The Counting](#)," 9/30/08).

Also nixed was a reference to a Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)-created statistic that has Michigan No. 2 for a "combined wind generation and manufacturing potential" statistic (See

["Four Plus Fourteen Equals Two,"](#) 10/3/08).

"We want to be the No. 1 state in the nation in renewable energy and renewable energy jobs," she said.

The job creating potential was shown off at the brand-new Dowding Industries plant in downtown Eaton Rapids, where the company just received its first order for wind turbine components on Friday, said company president Jeff **METTS**. Earlier in the day, Granholm signed a piece of legislative package at NextEnergy in Detroit.

Other points the Governor highlighted were the "net metering" aspect of the package, which allows people who produce alternative energy through wind turbines or solar panels, for example, to sell their excess energy back to the grid.

Also, the energy efficiency piece of the package is estimated to save consumers and businesses \$1.04 billion a year by 2025, she said.

Present at today's bill signing was Sen. Mark [SCHAUER](#) (D-Battle Creek), Rep. Mike [SIMPSON](#) (D-Brooklyn), Rep. Mike [NOFS](#) (R-Battle Creek), Rep. Joan [BAUER](#) (D-Lansing) and all three Public Service Commissioners, among a bevy of administration and legislative staffers who clocked hundreds of hours on the complicated package.