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DEVAL L. PATRICK

A clean break from the fossil fuel age The Boston Globe
By Deval L. Patrick July 2, 2008 Email | Print | Single Page | Text size

EVERYWHERE WE turn, Massachusetts residents are feeling the sting of high energy costs. With crude oil more than \$140 a barrel and gasoline more than \$4 a gallon, the price of fossil fuels strains household budgets and the Massachusetts economy as a whole.

By choice and necessity, the fossil fuel age is coming to an end. Think of this as a shift in an "age," not merely a shift in resource. The Stone Age didn't end because we ran out of stone, but because humankind had a better idea. Clean energy is today's better idea - better for people's pocketbooks, the economy, and the planet.

Today, I sign into law a comprehensive energy bill that takes a major step toward addressing this challenge and taking advantage of this opportunity. This legislation remakes the electricity market to reduce energy consumption through a dramatic increase in energy efficiency technology installed in our homes, offices, and factories.

This bill is just one piece of a clean energy vision for Massachusetts that I share with House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi and Senate President Therese Murray. Our vision capitalizes on the Commonwealth's natural advantages in technology and entrepreneurship to combat rising energy costs and satisfy the need for new, clean, affordable ways to meet energy needs - creating a whole new industry along the way.

We are pursuing this vision in a variety of ways, and on a variety of fronts. My administration brought the seven-year-long environmental review process for Cape Wind to an end, allowing the project to file for its permits and move toward construction. I look forward to the day when those wind turbines in the waters off Cape Cod - the first offshore wind farm in the country - stand as a testament to our commitment to renewable energy.

Last year, we won a nationwide US Department of Energy competition to host one of just two Wind Blade Technology Centers in the country. In this new facility, to be located in Charlestown, wind turbine blades almost a football field long will be tested for strength and durability, turning Massachusetts into a hub of research and development in the fastest-growing power source in the world.

Massachusetts is already home to a number of leading firms in the growing clean energy industry that will lead us toward independence from fossil fuels, and the state is doing all it can to encourage them to grow and bring their products to market in the Commonwealth.

Here are a few examples: A123 Systems in Watertown, which is developing batteries for plug-in hybrid cars to enable them to get up to 150 miles per gallon; Evergreen Solar, which is set to open a new solar-panel manufacturing facility in Devens, encouraged in part by the state's new rebate program for solar electricity installations, Commonwealth Solar; Mascoma in Cambridge and Sun Ethanol in Amherst, two leaders in cellulosic biofuel, the non-petroleum, non-food-based fuel of the future, which will get a boost from a gas-tax exemption now pending in the Legislature, the first of its kind in the country; and GreatPoint Energy, a Cambridge firm now demonstrating its innovative technology for turning coal and biomass into clean-burning natural gas at the Brayton Point power plant in Somerset.

The age of clean energy is ours for the taking - and for the good of the Commonwealth, we are taking it.

Deval L. Patrick is governor of Massachusetts.

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