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Massachusetts Senate to Take Action on Sweeping Climate and Plastics Bills

Strong steps to achieving net zero by 2050 goals, reducing plastic waste

(BOSTON—6/17/2024) This week, the Massachusetts Senate will debate comprehensive climate and plastics legislation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, helping the Commonwealth achieve its [net zero emissions by 2050 goals](#) drastically reducing plastic waste statewide.

The Senate will take up two separate bills to advance timely climate action: [An Act upgrading the grid and protecting ratepayers](#) will expand clean energy adoption to help Massachusetts get one step closer to meeting its aggressive climate goals; and [An Act to reduce plastics](#), which will ban carry-out plastic bags, prohibit single-use plastic bottle purchases by state agencies, and create a statewide program for recycling large plastic objects.

“Massachusetts knows the toll that climate change takes—it’s cities under heat emergencies and farms underwater,” said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “This week the Senate will take bold action to get our state to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and remove plastics that harm our people and the environment. We must leave our kids with a livable planet. This legislation takes concrete steps towards doing so. I want to thank Majority Leader Creem, Senator Barrett, and Senator Rausch for their diligent work to produce this climate package.”

“Plastics are bad for our environment, terrible for our health, and dangerous for our climate,” said **Senator Rebecca L. Rausch (D-Needham), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment**. “We cannot burn or bury our way out of the plastics problem, particularly when the pollution starts from plastics’ fossil fuel inception and continues for hundreds of years as microplastics, ash, and other harmful debris. The *Plastics Reduction Act* will take significant steps to address single-use and bulk plastics, reduce waste, and achieve our Commonwealth’s climate goals. I am deeply grateful to Senate President Karen Spilka, Senate Ways

and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, and the many colleagues, staff, experts, and advocates whose partnership and contributions have brought this legislation to the floor.”

An Act to reduce plastics

An Act to reduce plastics will reduce plastic waste that is too often found in fields, parks, streets and waterways—and too often fills landfills and disposal sites—ultimately harming the environment in Massachusetts communities and contributing to global climate change.

To drastically reduce plastics usage statewide, the legislation will prohibit carry-out plastic bags at retail stores statewide and require stores to charge 10 cents for recycled paper bags, five cents of which will be allocated to environmental protection measures. As of May 2023, 162 Massachusetts cities and towns, making up nearly 70 per cent of the state’s population, [already regulated single-use plastic bags](#).

The bill will also prevent plastic utensils and straws from automatically being given to consumers, prohibit single-use plastic bottle purchases by state agencies, and create a statewide program for recycling large plastic objects such as car seats.

In an effort to reduce the \$10 million in yearly avoidable costs directly caused by the flushing of non-flushable wipes, the bill will require non-flushable wipes to be clearly labeled with “Do Not Flush” warnings to prevent disruptions to the Commonwealth’s sewer system.

Full details of *An Act to reduce plastics* are available via a fact sheet in the [Senate's press room](#).

An Act Upgrading the Grid and Protecting Ratepayers

An Act Upgrading the Grid and Protecting Ratepayers will expand clean energy adoption to help the state get one step closer to meeting its aggressive climate goals and reach its net zero by 2050 emissions commitment, included in landmark legislation [passed by the Legislature in 2021](#).

The legislation will expedite siting and permitting processes for solar, wind, storage, and other clean energy infrastructure projects by setting 15-month permitting deadlines for larger projects, and 12-month deadlines for smaller projects. It will re-envision clean energy procurements, making future procurements more competitive and expansive while additionally allowing Massachusetts to partner with other New England states to help drive down costs and promote innovation in technologies to mitigate climate change.

It will help lower utility bills for consumers by directing providers to offer discounted rates to consumers with low- and middle-incomes and give the state more flexibility to negotiate contracts with providers. Under the legislation, unscrupulous “competitive electric suppliers”—which cost Massachusetts consumers over \$577 million from July 2015 to June 2023, [according to the Attorney General’s Office](#)—will be banned.

To reduce building emissions, the legislation will allow gas companies to pursue geothermal projects when appropriate, require consideration of greenhouse gas emissions when expanding or replacing gas pipelines, and require the state to evaluate the greenhouse gas emissions of each state-owned property.

The bill will also address a major barrier to emissions reduction by expanding electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure statewide. It will make it easier for local and state entities to purchase EV charging equipment, permit EV charging installation for condo owners, and extend the [MOR-EV tax incentive program](#) for EV purchases through 2027. To date, nearly 50,000 Massachusetts residents have saved over \$120 million on the purchase of electric vehicles through the MOR-EV program.

Full details of *An Act Upgrading the Grid and Protecting Ratepayers* are available via a fact sheet in the [Senate's press room](#).

Action on the legislation comes following a Monday morning poll of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means. Results of the poll can be found on the [committee web page](#).

The Senate will take up both pieces of climate legislation during a formal session on Thursday, June 20.