

## December 2025 Legislative Report

The 2025 legislative session marked the start of a two-year cycle, governed by new joint rules designed to increase transparency and efficiency, including requirements for public committee votes, the posting of bill summaries online, and extended public notice for hearings, all of which closed on November 19<sup>th</sup>.

While the formal legislative session has closed, the legislature will continue in **informal sessions** to address pending bills, and the governor has signed some budget and policy legislation. Key next steps include the December 3rd deadline for reporting many bills and the start of the continued session in January, when new bills will be filed, and the older ones introduced in 2025 will continue to be debated and acted upon.

The 194<sup>th</sup> session of the Massachusetts General Court will end in early January of 2027, before the 195<sup>th</sup> session begins later in that month.

If one is interested, tracking of specific bills, hearing schedules, and additional resources are available on the official [Massachusetts Legislature website](#).

Key dates and information for the 2026 session include:

- **Convening Date:** The House and Senate are scheduled to convene on January 7, 2026.
- **Governor's Budget Submission:** The Governor is expected to submit the General Appropriation Bill for the FY 2027 budget by January 28, 2026.
- **Budget Debate:** House and Senate debates on the FY 2027 budget are expected to occur in April and May 2026, respectively.
- **Formal Session Deadline:** The last day for formal sessions in the second annual session is July 31, 2026.
- **Session End:** The 194th session concludes on January 5, 2027, the day before the 195th General Court convenes.
- **Elections:** The next general election, where all members of the House and Senate will be on the ballot is scheduled for November 3, 2026.

There were several significant acts signed into law during the first annual session of the 194th General Court, with many provisions taking effect throughout 2025:

- **Salary Range Transparency Act:** Signed in July 2024, this law began implementation in 2025. As of February 1, 2025, employers with 100+ employees must report workforce demographic data, and by October 29, 2025, employers with 25+ employees must include a pay range in all job postings and provide it to employees upon request.
- **Affordable Homes Act:** Signed in August 2024, this act has multiple 2025 implementation dates. As of February 2, 2025, it became easier to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on single-family lots. Beginning May 5, 2025, individuals can petition courts to seal certain no-fault eviction records, making it easier to secure future housing.
- **Massachusetts Parentage Act:** Effective January 1, 2025, this law modernizes parentage laws to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ parents and those using assisted reproduction or surrogacy, ensuring all families are protected regardless of marital status or gender identity.
- **Health Care Protections:** The Legislature passed "An Act Strengthening Health Care Protections in the Commonwealth" (Chapter 16 of the Acts of 2025), which aims to shield personal information related to reproductive and gender-affirming care from out-of-state investigations.
- **Budget and Infrastructure:** Several supplemental budgets for fiscal year 2025 were approved, along with a bill in August 2025 dedicated to financing improvements to municipal roads and bridges.
- **Close Out Budget Signed:** On November 26, Governor Maura Healey signed a \$2.3 billion Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) closeout supplemental budget to settle outstanding expenses for the fiscal year that ended in June. The net cost to the state is approximately \$806.9 million after accounting for federal reimbursements. The closeout budget distributes funds across various areas to address deficiencies and make necessary investments. Key areas funded include:

- MassHealth and Healthcare: Over \$2 billion is allocated to cover rising MassHealth costs, fund public health hospitals, and support former Steward Health Care hospitals.
- Affordability & Human Services: This includes funding for universal school meals, substance use treatment programs, and reproductive health care providers.
- Housing: \$75 million is directed to the Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund for affordable rental housing.
- Public Safety & Infrastructure: Funds are provided for no-cost phone calls for incarcerated individuals, snow and ice removal, and State Police operations.
- Technology & Education: This includes funding for technological upgrades at the Department of Transitional Assistance and increased student financial aid.
- The budget also includes policy changes, such as setting a statewide primary election day and a provision on renter-paid broker fees. This budget is seen as a crucial step in concluding the previous fiscal year and preparing for future economic uncertainties.
- For more details, you can review the official press releases on the Mass.gov website.

### **Legislation Likely to be Considered in 2026**

The 2026 session will see continued debate on several significant issues and pending bills that have yet to be enacted:

- **Healthcare Market Oversight & Pharmaceutical Access:** A significant bill, S.868/S.2522, aims to improve prescription drug affordability by identifying high-cost drugs, potentially setting upper payment limits, and expanding cost-sharing limits for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. It also seeks to prevent financial instability in the healthcare system by increasing oversight of private equity acquisitions of healthcare entities.
- **Data Privacy:** Multiple bills relating to data privacy, such as the Massachusetts Data Privacy Act (H.104/S.45) and the Massachusetts Information Privacy and Security Act (S.301), are top priorities for

consideration. These bills aim to protect residents' digital privacy and restrict the sale of sensitive data like cellphone location information.

- **Criminal Justice Reform:** Several reform bills remain in the legislative pipeline, including "Clean Slate" legislation (S.1114) for the automated sealing of eligible criminal records, and "Treatment Not Incarceration" (S.1117), which would allow courts to mandate treatment for substance use disorders without revoking probation solely for a positive test.
- **Climate & Infrastructure:** The "Mass Ready Act" (H.4744), proposed by Governor Healey, includes significant investments in dam and bridge upgrades and streamlines permitting for climate resilience projects. Other bills focus on preventing the expansion of natural gas infrastructure (H.3547/S.2290) and on requiring major polluters to pay for the costs of climate action.

Berkshire County legislators had a busy year introducing legislation, if you are interested in reviewing the bills each legislator filed.

A complete list of all Massachusetts legislators and the bills they have filed for the **2025-2026 legislative session** is available on the official website of the Massachusetts General Court. There is no single, static list of all legislators with all their bills in one place, as information is dynamic and updated in real-time as bills are filed and progress.

## How to Find the Information

You can find the information you need by using the official online tracking system.

1. **Use the Official Website:** Navigate to the Massachusetts Legislature website.
2. **Browse or Search Bills:** From the homepage, you can select the "Bills & Laws" or "MyLegislature" options.
3. **Search by Legislator (Sponsor):** The most effective way to see a specific legislator's filings is to use the search function and filter by "Sponsor" or legislator name.

4. **View Individual Legislator Pages:** Many legislators also list their sponsored bills on their personal legislative pages, such as the pages for [Senator Cindy Friedman](#) or Senator Mike Moore.

**Leigh Davis is requesting help with the enactment of legislation [H.4130 — An Act Expanding the Accelerated Bridge Program](#).**

This bill matters for communities across Massachusetts — mainly rural and small towns like ours. When a bridge fails in Boston, it's repaired in days. But in places like **Great Barrington, Lee, and Sheffield**, and in rural regions across the Commonwealth, repairs can take years.

In Great Barrington, the **Brookside Bridge** was shut down overnight last year. What began as a **\$3.6 million** project has now ballooned to **over \$11 million**, and a permanent solution has been delayed until **2030**. And it's not just Great Barrington that's feeling the strain — towns across the district and throughout rural Massachusetts are facing the same challenges. That's not planning — that's crisis management.

Massachusetts now ranks among the **worst states in the nation** for the percentage of bridges in poor condition. According to the **Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center**, the average resident lives just **1.7 miles** from a structurally deficient bridge, and **one in nine crossings** occurs on one. In the **Berkshires**, 13 bridges are fully closed and 68 are load-restricted — the **highest percentages in the Commonwealth**. Yet despite being the largest geographic region in Massachusetts, we receive one of the smallest shares of infrastructure funding.

**H.4130** would help fix that. It establishes a new five-year **Accelerated Bridge Fund** to repair and replace structurally deficient bridges more quickly and equitably. The bill streamlines design and permitting, encourages regional coordination, increases transparency, and prioritizes safety in rural and underserved communities — because mobility and safety shouldn't depend on your zip code.

**Add your support:**

You can send written testimony in support of this legislation to:

[Siobhan.Morrissey@mahouse.gov](mailto:Siobhan.Morrissey@mahouse.gov)  
cc: [Alexander.Chilton@masenate.gov](mailto:Alexander.Chilton@masenate.gov)

## Funding for the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Our federal legislators recently announced that the Trump administration pledged \$106 million in grants to five regional transit authorities (RTA) and the MBTA to help finance new buses and bus facilities across Massachusetts. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority will receive \$8,381,341 from these funds

The funding was part of a \$2 billion national round for bus purchases under the Federal Transit Administration's annual bus and bus facilities capital investment program.

This year's round of grants under that program was considerably larger than usual, thanks to an additional \$1.6 billion set-aside for low-emission and zero-emission buses in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (sometimes referred to as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law")

Related to transportation - If one lives in the Boston metro area, the health of the public transportation system is a frequent topic of discussion in the legislature and municipal governments. A recently released Better City report includes more detailed recommendations to improve the system's reliability and capacity, such as expanding the e-bike fleet, integrating charging infrastructure into bike docks, and prioritizing co-location with transit and filling network gaps when siting new stations. As residents in the Berkshires see increased traffic congestion in the summer months, it may be worth considering incorporating bicycles into planning for future projects in some areas.

According to the report, as their blue bikes network grows, their regional bike infrastructure is growing too. Safe, separated infrastructure—such as the Somerville Community Path, Northern Strand, and Neponset River Greenway—is attracting more commuters and recreational users alike. To help manage this growth, A Better City, with support from the Massachusetts Department of

Transportation, launched the Guided Ride Series last April to provide riders with the knowledge and confidence to navigate this new urban bike infrastructure by teaching best riding practices, rules of the road, safety tips and tricks, and includes published routes accessible for free via smartphone. They have also committed to educational campaigns on the program.

Part of the program's success is providing flexibility in how people get around, and communities in the area have committed to bike docking stations and to allowing bikes on buses and trains. The MassDOT Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan estimates that 57 percent of trips taken across all modes in Massachusetts are three miles or less. That's a 12-minute bike ride, on average, if you're riding a Bluebike, or e-bike the rider is reducing their carbon emissions.

The Boston program offers riders multiple ways to try an e-bike. Casual riders can unlock a single ride for \$2.95 plus \$0.25 per minute or purchase a day of unlocks for \$10 plus \$0.25 per minute. Membership options offer free unlocks and a reduced per-minute rate of \$0.10 for monthly and annual options, and \$0.07 for income-eligible riders. For employers who want to offer this type of mobility to their workers, several subsidy levels are available, each including free unlocks and discounted per-minute rates for e-bikes. A Better City built a Bluebikes Calculator to demonstrate the low-cost, high-impact nature of this benefit, which costs less than 28 cents per day for an annual membership. With e-bikes supercharging the Bluebikes system, they are showing how bikeshare can be part of the solution to address our traffic crisis and to achieve our climate goals.

Could communities in Berkshire County that experience summertime traffic delays be successful in offering a program similar to Blue Bikes on a smaller scale?

**Ballot Questions:** The process of developing statewide ballot questions for the November 2026 election is underway. This process is used as an alternative to the normal legislative process, with the petitions known as initiative petitions.

*The Massachusetts Constitution allows voters to use the initiative petition process to: create a new law, amend an existing law, repeal a recently passed law, or amend the Massachusetts Constitution.*

*The process for placing a question on the state ballot can take years, depending on the type of question and when it begins. The number of signatures needed is based on the percentage of votes cast in the most recent election for Governor and therefore changes every four years.*

Specific topics that cannot be the subject of initiative petitions relate to religion, judges, the courts, specific places in the Commonwealth, specific appropriations, and certain provisions in the Massachusetts Constitution's Declaration of Rights. Further, if the voters reject a question, it cannot be placed on the ballot again for the next two state elections.

Further information on the process is available in our Guide to Statewide Ballot Question Petitions, which provides detailed information about the process and requirements.

The Massachusetts Constitution also allows voters to petition for non-binding public policy questions to appear on state election ballots in state legislative districts.

Unlike initiative petition questions, public policy questions do not have any legal effect. These questions work like public opinion polls, informing a state representative or state senator about voters' opinions in their district on a specific public policy issue.

At least 200 certified signatures must be submitted to place a question on the ballot in a state representative district. In comparison, at least 1,200 certified signatures are required for a state senate district.

Public policy question petitions are released in April of the election year. Petitions must be certified by local election officials and then submitted to the Elections Division by the first Wednesday in August.

For the next election, Initiatives on rent control, improving public records access, reducing the income tax, a sales tax on starter home construction, same-day registration, lawmakers stipends, and all-party primaries are among the proposals that have paid people to gather the 74,574 signatures needed to keep their initiative in the pipeline. The question that is garnering the most headlines is the enactment of statewide Rent Control.

State House News Service reports that the campaign behind a proposed 2026 ballot measure to establish rent control across the state has cleared the highest signature-

gathering hurdle in the initiative petition process, submitting what organizers describe as a "surplus" of voter support ahead of the local filing deadline. Two years ago, the signature-gathering requirement derailed an effort to place a local option rent control question on the 2024 ballot.

The proposal applies to all 351 cities and towns, whereas the state's last rent control law — banned by ballot in 1994 — required municipalities to opt into its policies. It would limit annual rent increases for most units to either the annual Consumer Price Index increase or 5%, whichever is lower. It would use the rent in place as of Jan. 31, 2026 as the baseline for future changes.

Supporters say the policy is a necessary response to a worsening housing crisis and would protect renters from sudden, destabilizing price spikes. The proposal exempts owner-occupied buildings with four or fewer units and would not apply to new construction until a building is at least 10 years old.

"Everywhere we went, we heard about how high rents are displacing workers and seniors," Rose Webster-Smith, director of Springfield No One Leaves, said in a press release distributed Tuesday. Other volunteers said they encountered widespread willingness from voters to sign.

Real estate industry groups, which unsuccessfully urged Attorney General Andrea Campbell to block the measure earlier this year, are preparing for a high-profile fight. Critics argue that rent control would suppress badly needed housing production and conflict with constitutional protections for property owners.

"The risks of this ballot question for our economy cannot be overstated. It is not an opt-in: this question creates the most restrictive rent control program in the entire United States and forces it on every city and town across the Commonwealth. It will unquestionably make our housing crisis worse and significantly reduce the supply of quality homes on the rental market," the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, Massachusetts Association of Realtors and NAIOP Massachusetts said in a statement.

Local election officials must certify signatures before campaigns submit them to the secretary of state by Dec. 3. The field of potential 2026 ballot questions is expected to narrow in the coming days as the certification process weeds out proposals that fell short.

.Landlords who are generally opposed to the measure have their own website with advice on actions that can be taken at:

<https://massrealestatelawblog.com/2025/11/25/landlord-advisory-preparing-for-statewide-rent-control-in-massachusetts-2026-ballot-initiative/>

*Amir Wilson is transportation and data policy manager at A Better City recently authored an article on the bike sharing program in Boston.* If one lives in the Boston metro area, the health of the public transportation system is a topic of frequent discussion in the legislature and municipal governments. A recently released Better City report includes more detailed recommendations for improving the reliability and capacity of the system, such as expanding the e-bike fleet, integrating charging infrastructure into bike docks, and prioritizing co-location with transit and filling network gaps when siting new stations. As residents in the Berkshires see increased traffic congestion in the summer months, it may be worth considering incorporating bicycles into planning for future projects in some areas

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## **House punts on sweeping energy bill that would dial back state climate commitments (*CommonWealth Beacon*)**

As the legislature was barreling toward adjournment for the year, a contentious 106-page bill released in the last weeks of the legislative session, sponsored by Michael Cusack and 41 other legislators, was quickly pushed out of the joint account Committee on Energy and the sponsors hoped to have it passed by the House, before their November 19th adjournment, before it skidded to a stop.

If enacted, the bill could render Massachusetts's 2030 climate commitments null and void the *CommonWealth Beacon* reported.

The measure would grant Massachusetts “immunity” should the state miss its target if the top environmental official in Massachusetts attributes that outcome to “the actions or inactions of the federal government.”

In such an instance, the state’s goal to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels would become “advisory in nature and unenforceable.” The bill leaves in place the state’s long-term goal of cutting emissions by 85 percent by 2050.

“The number one goal is to save money and adjust to the reality with clean energy,” Cusack said in an interview. “This is a bill that saves significant money, real hard dollars, that people will see the impact of, while also dealing with the assault we’ve gone through,” he said, referring to moves by the Trump administration to roll back climate initiatives. Meanwhile, Cusack said, it allows “planning for the future by not touching any mandates farther out. We want to get there, but if we’re going to miss our mandates, and it’s not the fault of ours, it’s incumbent on us not to get sued and not have the ratepayers be on the hook.”

The plan reverberating around Beacon Hill, [as first reported by \*CommonWealth Beacon\* last week](#), is sure to put lawmakers in a politically difficult position and test their willingness to defend the climate commitments enacted just four years ago. And it forces them to confront the drastic changes President Trump has made to Massachusetts's efforts to transition to a clean energy economy, including stalled offshore wind permitting and the revocation of funding for solar energy and electric vehicles, as the onset of winter stokes residents' anxiety over energy costs.

Cusack's measure would cap the budget for the state's energy efficiency program, Mass Save, at \$4 billion, marking a \$500 million cut from its current budget as approved by the Department of Public Utilities

**MASSACHUSETTS COULD RENDER** its 2030 climate commitments null and void under new sweeping legislation being fast-tracked by the House, according to a copy of the bill viewed by *CommonWealth Beacon*.

The measure, led by Rep. Mark Cusack, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy, would grant Massachusetts "immunity" should the state miss its target if the top environmental official in Massachusetts attributes that outcome to "the actions or inactions of the federal government."

In such an instance, the state's goal to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels would become "advisory in nature and unenforceable." These changes to the state's bedrock climate law, along with other major shifts in state climate policy, such as offshore wind procurements and energy efficiency funding, are currently under consideration by lawmakers on the House panel and could be quickly advanced.

Cusack is aiming to move the legislation out of the House with a floor vote before lawmakers break for the year on November 19 after a poll of committee members closes on Wednesday. He says he has House Speaker Ron Mariano's support for the bill, though a spokesperson for the speaker said he hasn't yet taken an official position.

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The House Budget Chief, Aaron Michlewitz, a Democrat from Braintree and the House’s point person on energy, explained that if the bill were enacted, it would weaken the state’s 2030 climate mandate. He described the bill as “still something that we’re working on,” and added he does not “foresee us necessarily getting to it before the end of the week.”

But those dramatic changes are on ice, at least for the next few months, and Cusack’s proposal now looks more like a trial balloon whose journey quickly hit a tempest than a plan with the full backing of House Democrats.

“We are probably going to have to have a conversation at some point related to whether we can meet our goals for 2030,” Michlewitz told reporters. “I think that’s a real challenge that we’re facing, particularly when you have a federal government that is trying to thwart us at every possible turn in relation to trying to get to those goals. Having that conversation is certainly coming to a head at some point, but I do not think it will be in this vehicle as we move forward.”

The delay will give House Democrats time to forge a position more palatable to climate groups. It also pushes any action on Gov. Maura Healey's energy-affordability legislation, which she filed in May, until into or after the winter with high utility bills again looming.

Cusack's proposal sharply raised eyebrows both in Massachusetts and across the country. The *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial board [highlighted the bill](#) as a symbol of Democrats reconsidering climate priorities.

It triggered an avalanche of opposition from climate groups, who viewed it as a betrayal of the state's legal commitment to slashing greenhouse gas emissions and a sudden pivot with little warning. Activists rallied outside the State House, and representatives from nearly 100 environmental and development groups wrote to Michlewitz on Friday, calling the proposal a "grave misstep."

Some influential voices outside the climate movement supported the measure. Associated Industries of Massachusetts president Brooke Thomson [last week announced](#) her group "unequivocally supports" Cusack's proposal, saying it "balances realistic climate policies with real savings that keep the lights on."

## **Greening of America: 'No going back' on solar, renewables**

By Christian M. Wade | CNHI State Reporter

Oct 31, 2025, Updated Nov 12, 2025

What does the future of solar look like, and how will it affect decisions on battery storage and other infrastructure investments as the green industry faces uncertainty following the Trump administration's scrapping of federal subsidies that had fueled solar growth?

Solar power is surging across the U.S. as costs plummet and companies ramp up large-scale commercial projects, but experts say the green industry faces an uncertain future as the Trump administration scraps federal subsidies that have helped foster the growth of the clean energy sector.

The U.S. Department of Energy reports that last year, more than 90% of all new U.S. electrical generating capacity came from renewable sources, with solar power accounting for more than 81% — the largest single-year increase from any energy source in two decades. Nationwide, there are enough solar installations to power more than 40 million homes, with utility-scale solar accounting for 71% of that capacity, says the Solar Energy Industries Association. A typical 100 megawatt solar project produces enough energy to power 17,200 average U.S. homes, according to the industry group.

This growth is a testament to the power of American innovation," said Abigail Ross Hopper, SEIA's president and CEO. "We're building factories, hiring American workers and showing that solar energy means made-in-America energy."

But Hopper said the growth of the industry will be impacted by the decision of President Donald Trump's administration to end federal subsidies for solar and other clean energy projects.

The Trump administration's opposition to solar power creates a "risk driving investment overseas, stifling job creation," she said, "raising costs on consumers, and handing America's manufacturing advantage to our competitors."

"This industry has proven what's possible when businesses have the certainty to invest," Hopper said. "If the administration does not reverse its harmful actions that have undermined market certainty, energy costs will rise even further, and the next wave of factories and jobs could be at risk."

## How it works

Solar energy, which was initially developed in the late 1800s, essentially converts sunlight into electricity and heat.

Solar panels, installed on a rooftop or in a utility-scale array, are generally silicon-based within a metal frame and glass casing. When this material is exposed to photons of sunlight, it releases electrons and produces an electric charge. The current is then converted for use in homes and businesses or to power the electric grid.

The rapid expansion of large-scale solar farms and rooftop installations in recent years has primarily been driven by falling technology costs. China, one of the world's largest solar producers, has driven panel prices down by almost 90% over the past decade, according to energy analysts.

Globally, solar capacity is set to double by 2030, with China, India and other countries leading the charge through massive utility-scale projects and creative financing models.

Meanwhile, major corporations such as Amazon, Tesla, and Target are scaling solar quickly to lower their operating costs and reduce their carbon footprint. Amazon is the world's largest corporate purchaser of renewables, with more than 600 wind and solar projects in the works nationwide, according to the company's website.

As technology improves, wind and solar are among the cheapest and fastest ways to provide electric power, supporters say.

## **Administrative priorities**

Experts say the industry faces darkening skies as the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress roll back clean energy tax credits and throw up roadblocks to renewable energy projects, which threatens to leave the United States behind other countries in the shift to solar power and renewables.

Trump has moved to scuttle major wind and solar energy projects since he returned to the White House in January.

Trump's hand-picked Interior Secretary Doug Burgum issued a series of orders earlier this year to restrict solar and wind development, including changing the criteria for evaluating renewable energy projects on federal lands, requiring that the Interior secretary personally approve each project.

"Based on common sense, arithmetic and physics, wind and solar projects are highly inefficient uses of federal lands," Burgum said in a statement, claiming it will "level the playing field for dispatchable, cost-effective and secure energy sources," such as "clean" coal and natural gas.

Meanwhile, Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" Act, signed in July, mandates oil and gas lease sales, fast-tracks environmental reviews, and opens millions of acres of public land for coal leasing and terminates incentives for solar power, including one that offered homeowners a federal tax credit of up to \$10,500 for installing rooftop solar panels.

Many companies with projects in the works are scrambling to install solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries the size of shipping containers before federal tax credits expire or become harder to claim. Solar projects must break ground by July to be eligible for tax credits that Congress voted to eliminate years earlier than previously planned.

In August, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pulled the plug on the \$7 billion Solar for All program, approved by Congress in 2023 as part of the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act to expand solar power to low-income households.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called it a "boondoggle" that's "rife with graft" from unscrupulous companies taking cuts from the federally funded grants. The move prompted federal lawsuits from states, labor unions and the solar industry.

Among the companies impacted by the grant freeze is Groundswell, a nonprofit that works in several Southern states, including Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, which was expecting \$156 million. To date, the group has broken ground on 24 megawatts of solar projects worth more than \$20 million that benefit low-income households.

"There's a lot at stake," Groundswell CEO Michelle Moore said in a statement. "These projects — located in small towns across seven states, all of which were sited in partnership with the local community — now hang in the balance."

### **'No going back'**

Environmentalists say, despite the pushback by the Trump administration, the economics of solar are strong and it has proven itself as a valuable renewable energy to help reduce excess greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are contributing to a warmer planet, fueling devastating storms and rising seas.

"Globally, there is no going back on this," Kate Sinding Daly, vice president for law and policy at the New England-based Conservation Law Foundation. "Wind and solar are the future of renewable energy. The momentum may be slowed in this country, but it's not going to be reversed."

The solar power movement has plenty of critics who argue that the full-throttled embrace of clean energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will ultimately drive up consumer costs, cause rolling blackouts, and not provide enough electricity to meet demands, among other criticisms.

Lisa Linowes, a New Hampshire-based energy policy analyst, argues that states such as California, New York, and Massachusetts are pushing through policies aimed at encouraging the expansion of green energy, which are hurting energy consumers, driving up costs, and putting increased pressure on the nation's electric grid.

"The public is largely in the dark about what's happening with renewable energy," she said. "The states and environmentalists who are pushing for a net-zero environment are telling everyone that wind and solar are the cheapest forms of electricity. But the reality is it's cost-prohibitive, and we just don't have the land for it."

One way states are trying to accelerate the shift to solar power through net-metering programs, which allow consumers who install rooftop solar on their homes to pay lower rates for electricity for sharing power with the regional grid. Some states require utilities to buy the electricity generated by solar power at retail prices.

But Linowes and other critics say those programs are largely benefiting homeowners who can afford to install rooftop solar, with ratepayers who aren't benefiting directly from net-metering picking up the tab. Those costs have added to utility bills in regions such as the northeast, which already has some of the highest energy costs in the nation.

"Net-metering is one of the largest portions of a utility bill in Massachusetts and other states with these programs," Linowes said. "These policies are hurting energy consumers."

A recent report by the Fiscal Alliance Foundation, Americans for Prosperity Foundation, and other conservative groups examined the decarbonization plans of six New England states. It is estimated that the states would collectively spend

\$815 billion through 2050, with the average household paying nearly \$100 more a year for electricity.

Commercial employers would see their costs rise by about \$489 per year, while industrial manufacturing customers would see their electric bills increase by an average of almost \$5,280 per year, according to the report. The report's authors called on policymakers to focus on expanding access to natural gas and other cheaper, reliable energy sources.

"We should be focusing on a common sense and realistic approach to make energy more affordable for everyone — including investing in reliable and affordable energy sources and avoiding money wasted on these rebate programs and subsidies for expensive and unreliable alternative energy," said Paul Craney, the Fiscal Alliance's executive director.

"This approach would lower costs for every household and business in Massachusetts — not just the ones who qualify for tax breaks," he said.

In a related issue, communities across Massachusetts are seeing growing opposition to battery storage projects. This local resistance reflects a national trend: at least 96 battery projects have faced public opposition since 2021, often citing public safety and environmental concerns. While acknowledging concerns from past incidents, the clean grid director at the Environmental League of Massachusetts stated that the relative risk of a battery fire is "incredibly low," similar to that of natural gas pipelines, noting that such systems have been safely operated in the state since at least 2019.

In a related area, on Nov 26, Linda Friedman and Maxine Josehow reported from Washington on EPA's decision limiting methane emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency announced on Wednesday that it would delay a requirement that

the oil and gas industry limit methane emissions, a powerful planet-warming gas. Under the requirement, which dates to the Biden administration, oil and gas companies were supposed to start this year reducing the amount of methane they release into the atmosphere. Instead, the Trump administration is giving them until January 2027 and is considering repealing the measure altogether.

The move dealt a blow to any remaining effort by the United States to slow Earth's dangerous warming. It came after the Trump administration [boycotted the United Nations climate summit](#) this month, the first time the United States was absent since the annual meetings began 30 years ago.

Under President Trump, the E.P.A. is also working to [erase the government's legal authority](#) to limit greenhouse gas emissions from car tailpipes and power plant smokestacks. Those rollbacks could be completed in the coming months.

*I hope your holiday season gives you time to renew, as 2026 appears to be going to be a challenging year for local government leaders.*

*Christine Rasmussen*