

July 9 BEA Monthly Exchange Meeting Summary

The Building Electrification Accelerator hosted Carrie Katan from Green Energy Consumers Alliance to discuss the MA state energy affordability bill currently moving through the legislature. Carrie explained how the bill came about, outlined key policy similarities and differences between the House and Senate versions, and discussed the challenges ahead in conference committee negotiations. The discussion covered specific concerns about municipal impacts, particularly regarding Mass Save budget cuts and alternative compliance payment funds that support local programs, with participants exploring advocacy strategies and coalition opportunities to influence the final legislation.

1. BEA Updates

Seth provided updates on the BEA's activities, upcoming deadlines for grants including the New England Heat Pump Accelerator and DPU's Intervenor Support Grant, and policy updates on the Mass Save three-year plan and DPU dockets. The August Exchange is cancelled, with the next community exchange meeting scheduled for September 10—participants are encouraged to reach out with discussion theme suggestions.

2. Guest Presentation: Massachusetts Energy Affordability Bill

Speaker: Carrie Katan, Green Energy Consumers Alliance

Carrie presented an overview of the Massachusetts House and Senate versions of the energy bill, explaining how current affordability concerns and political pressure led to the governor filing H-4144 and subsequent legislative actions. She detailed common policies in both bills including clean energy procurement, third-party supplier reform, data center requirements, and Mass Save administrative reforms, noting that policies appearing in both chambers are likely to become law. Carrie explained that a conference committee will now work out differences between the bills which center around the mechanisms to cut ratepayer costs. The House bill would cut \$1B from the current Mass Save 3-year plan budget and refund Alternative Compliance Payments (ACP) to ratepayers, whereas the Senate bill would allow for securitization of utility infrastructure loans and phase out the Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP). The makeup and timing of the conference committee has not yet been established, but while some provisions may be controversial, passage of an energy bill remains very likely due to political pressures ahead of November elections.

Q&A Highlights

- **Coalition Advocacy:** Carrie noted that whether a coalition approach to advocacy helps depends on the goal — GECA works with ad hoc groups like the Affordable Energy Coalition and occasionally Mass Power Forward, but technical experts may be more effective writing directly.

- Attendees were invited to get involved with MCAN, noting its roughly 5,000 members and 70 chapters have long been part of Mass Power Forward.
- Effective Avenues for Municipal Leaders: Municipal officials contacting their own legislators directly tends to carry more weight than individual constituents, especially when raising issues with committee chairs.
- Cronin–Barrett Debate: One participant asked about the reported Senate disagreement over ending line extension allowances for gas customers. Carrie explained the amendment failed on housing-cost concerns and isn't expected to resurface in either chamber's bill.
- Key Municipal Issues in the Bill: Carrie flagged alternative compliance payment funds, the scale of any Mass Save cut, and new MLP requirements around decarbonization planning as the issues most likely to affect municipalities. Others agreed that the potential Mass Save budget cuts are likely the single biggest issue.
- Timeline for Passage: Carrie doesn't expect conference committee action by July 31, expects August to slow things further, and anticipates real pressure to finalize before November.
 - Post-Conference Process: Once a bill clears conference, it typically gets an up-or-down vote in both chambers, then goes to the Governor for signature.
- GECA's Priorities: A letter to the conference committee on ACPs, third-party suppliers, Mass Save, and securitization/GSEP is the first priority, followed by lawmaker outreach and coalition coordination.
- 2028-2030 Mass Save Planning Cycle: Carrie expects real uncertainty here, especially if the House's proposed Inspector General oversight of Mass Save moves forward.

3. Next Steps

- Carrie: Green Energy Consumers Alliance will draft a letter outlining its positions on key issues (alternative energy portfolio standard, third-party electric suppliers, Mass Save cuts, GSEP wind-down, securitization) for the conference committee, and engage coalition allies to ensure a clear, unified message.
- Fred: MCAN welcomes interested participants to connect via email (fred@massclimateaction.net) to engage in MCAN's work through Mass Power Forward, particularly on the energy affordability bill.