

Bravo, Berwick!

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Kudos to Don Berwick for announcing his opposition to a new natural gas pipeline, and for stating his reasons so clearly: it would constitute a long-term commitment to use fossil fuels, and we are uncertain about our future energy needs and whether we would really need it.

Berwick rightly emphasized that sometimes a short term bridge is needed until a region achieves a power grid of completely emissions-free energy. However, the short term bridge does not need to be fossil fuel.

In a January 2014 case in Minnesota, a judge ruled that the local utility commission must accept a bid for solar power arrays instead of natural gas generator bids because scalable solar was “the most reasonable and prudent” way to meet uncertain, short term energy needs. In his detailed analysis, the judge emphasized solar could be installed in small units in different areas hooking into existing wiring and shielding ratepayers from the costs of new wiring (natural gas plant needed new wiring).

Solar units distributed in multiple locations would also strengthen the power grid by making it more reliable. Solar requires no fuel inputs thus shielding ratepayers from fuel price increases. Additional small solar arrays could be added if energy needs grew. And the solar bid would help the utility reach its mandated renewable energy targets.

Finally, the judge noted solar arrays avoid the impact of emissions and will not require water for cooling!

I urge all the candidates for Governor to become familiar with this case and help Massachusetts transition to emissions-free energy without more natural gas infrastructure.

JUDY WEISS

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