



For Immediate Release
July 18, 2017

ICC CONTACT: Marianne Manko
Office: (217) 782-5793
Mobile: (217) 993-1000
Marianne.Manko@Illinois.gov

ICC Policy Session Examines Impacts of the Future Energy Jobs Act on Illinois' Renewable Energy Market

CHICAGO: On Wednesday, July 12, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) hosted a policy session in which a diverse range of experts assessed the current renewable energy landscape in Illinois and forecasted the impact that the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) will have on the State's economy, energy markets and emerging technology. The forum, titled "Illinois' Power Meter," was the first policy session organized by **Acting Commissioner Sadzi Martha Oliva**.

Stakeholders and other industry representatives filled the room to hear the timely discussion about renewables in light of FEJA, which went into effect June 1. "It's important to have a current reading of Illinois' renewable energy meter to understand where we are headed pursuant to the law's policy objectives," said Acting Commissioner Oliva.

Anthony Star, Director of the Illinois Power Agency (IPA), kicked off the discussion by explaining how FEJA improved upon prior efforts made in developing renewable energy in Illinois, and reviewing key components of the legislation's goals and the IPA's role. Mr. Star added that FEJA provided a jumpstart to wind and solar which "should lead to hundreds of megawatts of new wind and solar while we develop our long term plan."

Becky Stanfield, Senior Director of Western States at Vote Solar, and **MeLena Hessel**, Policy Advocate at the Environmental Law & Policy Center, shared how wind and solar energy will ramp up in Illinois and highlighted the economic savings and opportunities generated through FEJA. "The demand and supply for renewables are there," said Ms. Stanfield. "We are ready for liftoff in Illinois."

Andrew Barbeau, President of The Accelerate Group, noted that stakeholders should re-evaluate the definition of baseload and how battery storage bolsters the reliability of renewable energy resources in order to meet baseload demand. Similarly, **Amy Francetic**, Senior VP of Corporate & New Ventures at Invenergy, reported on the data platforms for renewable energy resources which not only have the capacity to collect data, but also purposefully organize and assess metrics in order to provide sophisticated insight on integration and generation. "Renewables are becoming the new baseload,"

said Ms. Francetic, adding that reaching Illinois' targets for energy efficiency may be the only factor that could be more economically impactful.

Shay Bahramirad, Director of Distribution System Planning, Smart Grid & Innovation at Commonwealth Edison (ComEd), also emphasized the advancements and investments that the utility has made in technology, such as smart inverters, to modernize the grid in order to safely and efficiently support renewable energy and allow for exponentially more. Dr. Bahramirad expressed the need for ongoing collective planning for hosting capacity as well.

Matthew R. Tomc, Director & Assistant General Counsel at Ameren, and **James P. Gignac**, Environmental & Energy Counsel at the Illinois Attorney General's Office, concluded the program by discussing the relationship between environmental policy and economic theory. Mr. Tomc shared that competitive markets are the most efficient means of allocating scarce resources; nevertheless, policy that integrates renewable energy is not interfering with markets "so long as stakeholders are open-minded and informed." He also added that in achieving a balance, stakeholders "will enhance and accelerate market choices for Illinois energy consumers." Mr. Gignac similarly expressed that the two objectives are complementary, and highlighted that stakeholders should evaluate how baseload is defined, because it is not a fuel type.

In her closing remarks, Acting Commissioner Oliva shared that Illinois' Power Meter would become a multi-topic series focused on Illinois' energy landscape and invited the audience to stay tuned for the next installment.

[Presentations](#) and a copy of the Session [agenda](#), which includes an overview of each panel, can be viewed on the ICC website.

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