

Protect Our Coast NJ (POCNJ)

PRESS RELEASE

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POCNJ Thanks Senate President and Speaker for Questioning Offshore Wind Development

Ocean City, New Jersey—Protect Our Coast NJ, an independent, non-partisan, grassroots group opposing offshore wind development, thanked New Jersey Senate President Nick Scutari and Speaker Craig Coughlin for publicly questioning the value and impact of Offshore Wind (OSW) development on New Jersey. This is the first time that New Jersey legislative leaders have questioned the impact that OSW will have on New Jersey ratepayers, the New Jersey economy, and our ocean environment. “This is something we have questioned for the last four years,” says Rich Baehrle, POCNJ Board Member. “We are pleased that some leaders are starting to understand our concerns, but their comments should not be taken as action to stop the project. Let’s see the legislative leaders pass legislation that will stop the construction of these damaging structures.”

“It is surprising that the two top legislative leaders made this announcement weeks after they supported legislation that would give Orsted over \$1 billion in tax benefits to construct OSW turbines,” Baehrle added. POCNJ and Defend Brigantine Beach filed a joint lawsuit on July 27, 2023, challenging the legislation on the grounds it was unconstitutional to give such an enormous benefit to a single private company. In New Jersey, laws that favor a single private party are generally unconstitutional.

Robin Shaffer, POCNJ Board Member, commented that this lawsuit is intended to prevent a special giveaway to a foreign corporation that is trying to industrialize our ocean. “We are opposed to the construction of offshore wind turbines that will only damage our environment and hurt the sea life without any comparative environmental benefit.”

The legislation reallocates the tax credits to Orsted from ratepayers in the calculation of electricity costs. “It is important that we oppose this legislation that will only increase ratepayers’ costs for electricity,” said Richard Stokes, POCNJ Secretary. These wind turbines are

expected to have limited impact on the reduction of CO2 emissions according to the Bureau of Energy of Ocean Energy Management. "This is poor public policy at its best that will increase electrical rates without any benefit to the environment," Stokes said.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has already acknowledged the wind turbines will destroy marine habitat, compress the seafloor, severely damage marine communities, compromise migration corridors for endangered marine mammals, cause commercial fishing stocks to decline, and injure the beach economy. New Jersey enjoys a \$47 billion tourist economy.

New Jersey's Division of Rate Counsel condemned the bill in a statement to the Assembly last month, saying that it would push the cost of the offshore wind project onto ratepayers, adding there was no evidence that Orsted needed the additional funds to build the turbine facility.

While the legislative leaders' comments are encouraging, it is also surprising that these legislative leaders are just now questioning the impact OSW will have on ratepayers and New Jersey communities. "We have been calling for studies and details about this project and the benefit it will have on New Jersey. We just don't see it," said Baehrlé. "The damage to our communities and marine life, including the last remaining 343 North Atlantic Right Whales from extinction, doesn't seem to benefit anyone, especially since it won't reduce CO2 emissions."

The Jersey shore has witnessed the unprecedented, tragic deaths of dozens of whales and dolphins following exceptions granted to the OSW industry to the Federal Marine Mammal Protection Act. These permits to harass and even kill whales and dolphins have been issued by the same federal agency (NOAA) tasked with protecting marine life so that the OSW industry could conduct preconstruction activities off our shores.

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