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Victory for North Carolina Air Quality and N.C. Renewable Energy Sector

Clean Air Carolina is pleased with Governor Roy Cooper's decision to sign House Bill 589 and an additional executive order to further renewable energy.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. - Clean Air Carolina, a statewide nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to improving North Carolina's air quality, is pleased with Governor Roy Cooper's decision to sign House Bill 589: Competitive Energy Solutions for NC. Governor Cooper signed the bill early Thursday afternoon along with Executive Order No. 11, aimed at promoting wind energy and mitigating the effects of a wind energy moratorium that he opposes. The divisive bill came under scrutiny by environmental groups when the bill was first introduced for its attempt to limit the solar energy market in the state.

Senators Szoka, Arp, and Watford introduced the bill last month as a consensus bill for the renewable energy market for both solar companies and utilities in North Carolina. Wind power was intentionally kept to the sidelines of these discussions as wind energy is still a relatively new resource for the state. Final negotiations between the House and Senate on H.B. 589 became tarnished with the inclusion of an unnecessary 18-month moratorium on the permitting of wind projects through December 31, 2018, pitting one renewable energy sector against another.

The bill comes at a tumultuous time for the renewable energy sector amidst political backlash and during an exceptionally high ozone season in North Carolina, with the Charlotte and Triangle Areas having recently reached dangerous levels of air pollution according to the Air Quality Index. For decades, emissions from the energy generation sector were by far the largest source of pollution across North Carolina.

Emissions from non-renewable energy generation are linked to a myriad of both chronic and acute cardiovascular and respiratory ailments, and contribute to premature death rates. The economy feels the impact of air pollution as well as long-lasting conditions, such as asthma and

heart disease, reducing worker productivity, increasing sick leave, and putting a strain on our health care systems.

"A strong renewable energy industry is good for our environment and our economy," said Governor Cooper. "This bill is critical for the future of significant increases in our already booming solar industry.

North Carolina has been, and is predicted to remain, one of the leading states for job creation and net migration. Over the next four to five years, H.B. 589 could increase installed solar capacity by five-fold at a time when our energy demands are rapidly increasing in both the private and commercial sectors.

"We would like to thank Governor Cooper for his commitment to further advance community and rooftop solar initiatives as well as streamlining wind project permitting to reduce the financial burdens this bill would cause to the advancing wind industry," said Clean Air Carolina Program Director Terry Lansdell, "While not a perfect solution, we support efforts to create a more equitable playing field for the energy market in North Carolina that will not only improve our economic opportunity, but will also benefit our public health."

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Clean Air Carolina is a statewide nonprofit advocacy group based in Charlotte, NC with a satellite office in the Triangle. Our mission is to ensure cleaner air quality for all North Carolinians through education and advocacy and by working with our partners to reduce sources of pollution.