

FIFTH DISTRICT REPORT

A SOLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR NEW ENGLAND
by Congressman Paul Tsongas

New England must shed its image of a non-producer and over-consumer of energy. For the past two months I have been involved in an effort that can help put New England on the proper energy track. I believe our area should be the site of the \$50 million dollar Solar Energy Research Institute. We have the scientific, technical, academic, and management expertise to lead the nation towards this efficient, affordable, non-polluting, and inexhaustible energy source. The National Academy of Sciences has already stated that constant or intense sunlight is not an important consideration in the decision of where the solar institute should be located.

Last week, Senator Kennedy and I called a meeting of New England Congressmen and Senators to mount a coordinated effort with regard to the location of the solar research center. We suggested that a "New England Energy Task Force" be formed and that it include representatives of scientific, technical, academic, management, business, labor, consumer, and environmental groups. The task force would profile the energy resources throughout New England, provide technical assistance, and encourage area institutions and companies to explore federal energy contract opportunities. The Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) alone has a budget of \$5 billion dollars in the present fiscal year. The businesses and educational institutions in the Fifth District could take great advantage if this type of groundwork was to be performed by a regional energy task force.

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Senator Kennedy and I have asked New England Council President Edward King to assist in forming the energy task force. The New England Council has been providing economic and energy analysis services to our Congressional delegation and has been assisting in efforts to bring a solar institute to the region.

New England finds itself far behind other areas of the country in the competition for a solar institute. The states of Colorado, Arizona, Florida, and New Mexico have spent up to \$2 million in preparation of submitting a proposal. Political pressure and hard sell tactics have also been used. New England's chances are dependent upon the recognition that no other area of the country can match our technological capabilities. We have only a few weeks to form the energy task force. ERDA will release guidelines for submission of final proposals within a month. From that point, proposals will have to be submitted either 45 or 60 days later.

The benefits of a Solar Energy Research Institute would be immense. Within a few years, a \$50 million annual budget for research would be available. At least 1000 jobs would be created. New England would become a prime area for companies working in the solar field. Additional federal and private capital would be available for these firms, and many more jobs would be generated. Incentives for marketing solar products would be greater in New England since energy costs are 35% above the average for the rest of the country.

My interest in the fight for the solar institute is based on my belief that we must immediately exploit this energy source. Our present supplies of fossil fuels are expensive and limited. There are serious environmental questions that must be answered with regard to the generation of nuclear energy. Earlier this year I sponsored an amendment to transfer an additional \$51.8 million into funds for immediate solar development. A number of constituents and representatives of area companies have been of tremendous assistance in this attempt. Dr. Sam Silverman of Lexington first suggested months ago the possibility of locating an ERDA facility in the Fifth District. Joseph Levangie and Harold Rosenbaum, employees of the AVCO Corporation and residents of Lexington, have been working with my office on this project. As Greater Lowell and Lawrence Chamber of Commerce Congressional Intern and Congressional Fellow, respectively, Joe and Harold conducted an invaluable study of the decision making process at ERDA. The material is presently being compiled and will be published for the benefit of all interested individuals and business concerns in our district. Many others have been of additional assistance in this matter.

Although we are engaged in an uphill battle, Senator Kennedy and I have been very pleased with the responsiveness of our colleagues and those we have asked for assistance. I am confident that the formation of the New England Energy Task Force will help make our area more conscious of energy problems and potential solutions. This is one means of mobilizing the best minds and most forceful leaders in New England to help lead the way out of the energy labyrinth.