

NEWS

from
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U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

TSONGAS TO FILE LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING THE NATION'S FIRST COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY CONSERVATION AND RENEWABLE RESOURCE PROGRAM INVOLVING ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT--LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL.

Senator Paul Tsongas will be joined by Senate Energy Committee Chairman, Henry Jackson, Massachusetts' senior senator, Edward Kennedy, and four other Senators tomorrow in filing legislation to provide all levels of government with assistance in developing local and state energy programs.

The bill, known as the Community Energy Act, is the revised version of legislation Tsongas filed last September. It has been changed to reflect testimony presented at four Senate Energy Committee hearings, one of which was held in Boston, a second in Springfield and two in Washington.

The Community Energy Act would create a first-in-the-nation grant program to fund community based energy conservation efforts as well as local investments in renewable energy resources. The legislation would:

- *Assist communities in energy planning and development through an amendment to the existing community development block grant program administered by HUD
- *Provide competitive grants to local governments for capital intensive energy projects such as district heating, small hydro-power, and co-generation
- *Consolidate existing state energy goals and provide financial assistance to states in developing their energy plans
- *Authorize the establishment of a National Community Energy Reference Center to provide information and technical assistance to state and local governments, areawide planning organizations and community groups

\$162 million has been requested to fund the program for fiscal year 1981.

"This legislation is significant," explains Tsongas, "because for the first time, it establishes a direct federal-local energy funding link to allow and encourage communities, large and small, to devise their own solutions to meeting local energy needs. The bill is designed to motivate long-range community energy planning, facilitate the use of alternative energy resources such as solar, wind, hydro and waste resource recovery, and stimulate the coordination of local, state and federal energy management."

Massachusetts communities have provided examples of the types of community based energy programs that would be funded nationwide through the Tsongas bill. Among them are projects underway in Fitchburg, Northampton, Lawrence and Springfield. The mayors of those cities have already joined with the mayors of Boston, Westfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, and Pittsfield in endorsing the Community Energy Act. The Massachusetts Energy Development Caucus, the State Office of Energy Resources, the New England Energy Congress, the Franklin County Task Force and Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group are among others supporting the bill. The bill has also received strong praise from the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.