



## Obama faces tough choice on Cape Cod wind farm



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WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama's enthusiasm for alternative energy is being buffeted by two political forces on opposite sides of plans to build the nation's first offshore wind farm off Cape Cod.

A leading foe of the \$1 billion project is Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., an early and influential backer of Obama's presidential bid. A strong proponent is Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, a close friend of Obama and a source for some of his best campaign speech lines.

The plan to erect 130 giant turbines across 25 miles of federal waters in Nantucket Sound poses an early test of the president's energy policy, on stark display Monday with Obama's order to re-examine whether California and other states should be allowed to have tougher auto emission standards to combat a build up of greenhouse gases and his directive for the government to get moving on new fuel-efficiency guidelines for the auto industry.

In the final days of George W. Bush's tenure, the Minerals Management Service issued a report saying the wind farm project poses no major environmental problems, clearing the way for the Obama administration to make a final decision on whether to issue a lease for the project. Reviews by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Interior Department's inspector general are still pending.

During the campaign, Obama had expressed strong support for wind power and indicated he wanted to double renewable energy production over the next three years. But deciding the fate of Cape Wind would force him to choose sides among friends and political allies. Patrick campaigned for Obama. Kennedy, despite being stricken with a brain tumor, is a critical backer of Obama's agenda, including health care reform.

Kennedy has fought the Cape Wind project for eight years, arguing it would kill birds and endanger sea life while imperiling the scenic area's tourism and fishing industries. The turbines would stand 440 feet above sea level when the tallest blades are pointing straight up. The Kennedy family's oceanside Hyannis Port, Mass., compound would have a clear view of the project to be located 4.7 miles offshore, but Kennedy says it is not why he opposes the project.

"The interests of our state have been basically submerged to a special interest developer," Kennedy has said of the project.

Patrick has championed the wind farm, embracing it as part of a push to make his state a leader in alternative energy.

"I haven't come to my conclusions for political reasons; I've come to my conclusions because I'm convinced that the future of our economy is very much connected to the development of a vibrant industry in alternative and renewable energy," Patrick said in announcing his support in 2005 as a gubernatorial candidate.

Project backers are wary of last-minute political meddling. They cite attempts in Congress over the years to derail it, including efforts by Kennedy.

"The opponents have proven to be very crafty and to embrace a scorched-earth approach to fighting this project," said Sue Reid of the Conservation Law Foundation, a conservation group supporting Cape Wind. "Of course we are going to be vigilant."

Kennedy complained there was a rush to approve the project as the Bush administration was departing—and before federal rules for offshore wind projects have been completed.

There are hundreds of proposals for wind-energy projects across the country, including more than a dozen for offshore projects. Wind energy accounts for only 1 percent of the nation's electricity. A federal report last year said wind energy could generate 20 percent by 2030, with offshore sources accounting for nearly 20 percent of that.

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On the Net:

Minerals Management Service:

<http://www.mms.gov/offshore/AlternativeEnergy/CapeWind.htm>

Cape Wind: <http://www.capewind.org/>

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