

Young amendment spurs flurry of letter writing

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On Feb. 15, U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, wrote a five-page letter asking colleagues for support of an amendment which would ban offshore wind farms within 1 1/2 nautical miles of a shipping lane or a ferry route. Such a ban would effectively kill the wind farm proposed for Nantucket Sound.

Young's letter, or at least the controversial amendment to which it refers, has prompted those on both sides of the wind farm debate to pick up their pens as well, expressing their opinions as the matter is decided in a Washington D.C. conference committee.

One of the first such letters came from Jim Gordon, president of Cape Wind Associates, the would-be developer of the wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal. In a four-page response to Young, Gordon blasted the congressman's letter as reflective of "NIMBY opposition" to the project in disregard of years of extensive review. The Feb. 21 letter calls Young's amendment "inappropriate and overly restrictive" and decries the "eleventh-hour" attempt to insert the rider into a much larger Coast Guard Reauthorization Bill.

Clean Power Now, a nonprofit on record as supportive of Cape Wind's project, expressed its opposition to the amendment in a letter writing campaign targeted at key members of the Senate conference committee, including Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, Olympia Snowe, R-Maine and Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii. Time was of the

essence, said the organization, as the conference committee could make its decision in a few days.

Supporters of the amendment had their say as well. On Feb. 23, Wayne Lamson, general manager of the Steamship Authority, wrote Sen. Trent Lott, R-Mississippi in support of the amendment. "With the wind farm as currently proposed for Nantucket Sound, it has the potential for creating a significant hazard to safe navigation for our vessels and other users of the waterways," wrote Lamson.

On Feb. 24, David Scudder, vice president of Hy-Line Cruises, wrote conference committee members in support of the amendment. Three days later Edward Barrett, president of Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, wrote that his organization "strongly supports" the amendment.

But while Barrett was writing his letter, Sen. Lincoln Chafee, R-Rhode Island, was writing his. In a two-page letter to conference committee members, Chafee expressed strong support for the Cape Wind project, calling it "very valuable to Rhode Island and greater New England.

"I urge you, as members of the Coast Guard Reauthorization Conference Committee, to reject the proposed language that would impose a 1.5 mile nautical mile restrictive zone on offshore energy production," wrote Chafee.

As of The Register's press time, the conference committee had yet to make its decision regarding Young's amendment.