

Kennedy: Wind farm is a 'backroom deal'

FROM WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON - Both sides in the bitter fight over a proposed Nantucket Sound wind farm are pressing hard as a showdown in Congress looms on a measure that could kill the project.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., yesterday called the proposed project a "backroom deal" and a giveaway to Cape Wind.

Sen. John F. Kerry, D-Mass., remains undecided, as he has been through the nearly five years the plan to put 130 wind turbines off the Cape coast has been on the table.

"These are uncharted waters," Kerry spokeswoman April Boyd said yesterday. "We want to see the final environmental impact studies on the project."

Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, Kennedy, and the Cape's congressman, Rep. William Delahunt, oppose the project.

On Capitol Hill, an amendment targeting the Cape Wind Associates project was quietly slipped into the \$8.7 billion Coast Guard reauthorization bill that could doom the wind farm. The measure was approved by a House-Senate conference committee earlier this month. It is unclear when the House and Senate will vote on the measure.

U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, was a key backer of the Coast Guard amendment, which gives veto power over the project to the governor

of Massachusetts.

Kerry is still reviewing the bill and has not reached any decision, Boyd said yesterday. His indecision is in stark contrast to Kennedy, whose staunch opposition to Cape Wind has made him a lightning rod for environmental groups and other project backers.

Kennedy, in a telephone interview with The Associated Press yesterday, bristled at the complaints, saying the state should have the say, not Cape Wind president Jim Gordon.

"People ought to be concerned with the backroom deal that was given to Cape Wind," Kennedy said. "(Gordon) has just looked to come in on a financial grab for 24 square miles of property."

Cape Wind benefited from a provision tucked into the sweeping energy bill Congress passed last summer that exempted the project from competitive bidding, Kennedy said. Cape Wind will also get about \$280 million in government subsidies, he said.

"They won't have to bid for it," Kennedy said. "That is the real outrage. I'm not going to be quiet on this issue."

Cape Wind denied Kennedy's charges. "There was no backroom deal with Cape Wind," said Cape Wind spokesman Mark Rodgers. "There was a provision to make sure Cape Wind wasn't penalized."