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Pressure Builds to Revive Wind Farm Plan for Nantucket Sound

By [CORNELIA DEAN](#)

The Bush administration and the senior members of the Senate energy committee are urging Congress to revive a proposal for the nation's first large offshore wind farm, in Nantucket Sound south of Cape Cod.

Last month, a Senate-House conference committee inserted a provision in the Coast Guard budget bill to give the governor of "the adjacent state," Massachusetts, veto power over any wind farm in the sound.

The governor, [Mitt Romney](#), a Republican who will step down at the end of this term, opposes the wind farm, as do most candidates running to succeed him.

In a letter on Thursday, the under secretary of energy, David K. Garman, said the provision would "inhibit the development of this clean, domestic, renewable energy resource." Mr. Garman noted that President Bush had endorsed wind energy.

Mr. Garman said New England power suppliers were counting on the project and added that singling it out "could have a chilling impact on the continued investment and growth of this promising renewable energy resource."

The senior senators, [Pete V. Domenici](#), the New Mexico Republican who is chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the panel's ranking Democrat, Jeff Bingaman, also of New Mexico, told Senate leaders in a letter Wednesday that unless the provision was deleted they would seek to prevent a vote on the Coast Guard bill as a whole.

They said it would be "unwise for the Congress to intervene statutorily" in reviews for energy projects.

"It is particularly objectionable to subject the development and implementation of national energy policy on submerged federal lands to the caprice of an individual state governor," they said.

The site, 24 square miles between Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, is unusual in that it is federal land surrounded by state waters. The project, proposed by Cape Wind Associates, a private business, would have 130 turbines in a grid. Each tower, with its turbines and blades, would rise 420 feet above the water.

Cape Wind says that the project could generate three-quarters of the electricity now used on the cape and islands and that the plan has won the support of many environmental groups and lawmakers.

But many Massachusetts politicians of both parties have long objected to the plan. They say Nantucket Sound, a major attraction in a tourism-based economy, is a poor site for a large industrial installation. Other critics argue that nothing so elaborate should be allowed on federal waters until the government had established better regulations. Charles Vinick, president of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, which formed to oppose the plan, said in an interview that the question was not whether wind power should be pursued but rather whether the sound was the right place for it.

Mr. Vinick said the towers would pose risks to boat and air traffic and would interfere with fishing.

"It is an inappropriate site for a project of this nature," he said, "and that is what is holding back wind energy. What we need is a project we can all rally behind because it is a good project."