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## SENATE BILL NO. 1347

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor  
on February 9, 2009)

(Patrons Prior to Substitute—Senators Wagner and Puckett [SB 1194])

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 56-46.1 and 56-580 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 11.1 of Title 10.1 an article numbered 5, consisting of sections numbered 10.1-1197.5 through 10.1-1197.11, relating to permits for certain renewable energy projects; penalty.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 56-46.1 and 56-580 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 11.1 of Title 10.1 an article numbered 5, consisting of sections numbered 10.1-1197.5 through 10.1-1197.11, as follows:

## Article 5.

## Small Renewable Energy Projects.

## § 10.1-1197.5. Definitions.

As used in this article, "small renewable energy project" means (i) an electrical generation facility with a rated capacity not exceeding 100 megawatts that generates electricity only from sunlight, wind, falling water, wave motion, tides, or geothermal power, or (ii) an electrical generation facility with a rated capacity not exceeding 20 megawatts that generates electricity only from biomass, energy from waste, or municipal solid waste.

## § 10.1-1197.6. Permit by rule for small renewable energy projects.

A. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 10.1-1186.2:1, the Department shall develop, by regulations to be effective as soon as practicable, but not later than July 1, 2012, a permit by rule or permits by rule if it is determined by the Department that one or more such permits by rule are necessary for the construction and operation of small renewable energy projects, including such conditions and standards necessary to protect the Commonwealth's natural resources. If the Department determines that more than a single permit by rule is necessary, the Department initially shall develop the permit by rule for wind energy, which shall be effective as soon as practicable, but not later than January 1, 2011. Subsequent permits by rule regulations shall be effective as soon as practicable.

B. The conditions for issuance of the permit by rule for small renewable energy projects shall include:

1. A notice of intent provided by the applicant, to be published in the Virginia Register, that a person intends to submit the necessary documentation for a permit by rule for a small renewable energy project;

2. A certification by the governing body of the locality or localities wherein the small renewable energy project will be located that the project complies with all applicable land use ordinances;

3. Copies of all interconnection studies undertaken by the regional transmission organization or transmission service provider, or both, on behalf of the small renewable energy project;

4. A copy of the final interconnection agreement between the small renewable energy project and the regional transmission organization or transmission service provider indicating that the connection of the small renewable energy project will not cause a reliability problem for the system. If the final agreement is not available, the most recent interconnection study shall be sufficient for the purposes of this section. When a final interconnection agreement is complete, it shall be provided to the Department. The Department shall forward a copy of the agreement or study to the State Corporation Commission;

5. A certification signed by a licensed electrical professional engineer licensed in Virginia that the maximum generation capacity of the small renewable energy project by (i) an electrical generation facility that generates electricity only from sunlight, wind, falling water, wave motion, tides, or geothermal power as designed does not exceed 100 megawatts, or (ii) an electrical generation facility that generates electricity only from biomass, energy from waste, or municipal solid waste as designed does not exceed 20 megawatts;

6. An analysis of potential environmental impacts of the small renewable energy project's operations on attainment of national ambient air quality standards;

7. Where relevant, an analysis of the beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed project on natural resources. For wildlife, that analysis shall be based on information on the presence, activity, and migratory behavior of wildlife to be collected at the site for a period of time dictated by the site conditions and biology of the wildlife being studied, not exceeding 12 months;

8. If the Department determines that the information collected pursuant to subdivision B 7 indicates that significant adverse impacts to wildlife or historic resources are likely, the submission of a

60 mitigation plan detailing reasonable actions to be taken by the owner or operator to avoid, minimize, or  
61 otherwise mitigate such impacts, and to measure the efficacy of those actions;

62 9. A certification signed by a licensed professional engineer licensed in Virginia that the small  
63 renewable energy project is designed and will be constructed in accordance with all of the standards  
64 that are established in the regulations applicable to the permit by rule;

65 10. An operating plan describing how any standards established in the regulations applicable to the  
66 permit by rule will be achieved;

67 11. A detailed site plan with project location maps that show the location of all components of the  
68 small renewable energy project, including any towers. Changes to the site plan that occur after the  
69 applicant has submitted an application shall be allowed by the Department without restarting the  
70 application process, if the changes were the result of optimizing technical, environmental, and cost  
71 considerations, do not materially alter the environmental effects caused by the facility, or do not alter  
72 any other environmental permits that the Commonwealth requires the applicant to obtain;

73 12. A certification signed by the applicant that the small renewable energy project has applied for or  
74 obtained all necessary environmental permits;

75 13. A requirement that the applicant hold a public meeting. The public meeting shall be held in the  
76 locality or, if the project is located in more than one locality in a place proximate to the location of the  
77 proposed project. Following the public meeting, the applicant shall prepare a report summarizing the  
78 issues raised at the meeting, including any written comments received. The report shall be provided to  
79 the Department; and

80 14. A 30-day public review and comment period prior to authorization of the project.

81 C. The Department's regulations shall establish a schedule of fees, to be payable by the owner or  
82 operator of the small renewable energy project regulated under this article, which fees shall be assessed  
83 for the purpose of funding the costs of administering and enforcing the provisions of this article  
84 associated with such operations including, but not limited to, the inspection and monitoring of such  
85 projects to ensure compliance with this article.

86 D. The owner or operator of a small renewable energy project regulated under this article shall be  
87 assessed a permit fee in accordance with the criteria set forth in the Department's regulations. Such fees  
88 shall include an additional amount to cover the Department's costs of inspecting such projects.

89 E. The fees collected pursuant to this article shall be used only for the purposes specified in this  
90 article and for funding purposes authorized by this article to abate impairments or impacts on the  
91 Commonwealth's natural resources directly caused by small renewable energy projects.

92 F. After the effective date of regulations adopted pursuant to this section, no person shall erect,  
93 construct, materially modify or operate a small renewable energy project except in accordance with this  
94 article or Title 56 if the small renewable energy project was approved pursuant to Title 56.

95 § 10.1-1197.7. Review and authorization of projects.

96 A. Upon submission of a complete application, the Department, after consultation with other  
97 agencies in the Secretariat of Natural Resources before authorizing the project, shall conduct an  
98 assessment of whether the application meets the requirements of the applicable permit by rule  
99 regulations. If the Department determines that the application is deficient, it promptly shall notify the  
100 applicant in writing and specify the deficiencies.

101 B. Any interested party, including an applicant for a permit, who has participated in a proceeding  
102 for a permit to construct or operate a small renewable energy project under procedures adopted by the  
103 Department pursuant to this section, and who is aggrieved by the final decision of the Department, shall  
104 have the remedies provided by the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.).

105 § 10.1-1197.8. Limitation of State Corporation Commission Authority.

106 A. If the owner or operator of a small renewable energy project to whom the Department has  
107 authorized a permit by rule pursuant to this article is not a utility regulated pursuant to Title 56, then  
108 the State Corporation Commission shall not have jurisdiction to review the small renewable energy  
109 project or to condition the construction or operation of a small renewable energy project upon the State  
110 Corporation Commission's issuance of any permit or certificate under any provision of Title 56.

111 B. If the owner or operator of a small renewable energy project to whom the Department has  
112 authorized a permit by rule pursuant to this article is a utility regulated pursuant to Title 56, such small  
113 renewable energy project shall be exempt from any provision of § 56-46.1 and any corresponding  
114 provision of subsection D of § 56-580 or Chapter 10.1 (§ 56-265.1 et seq.) of Title 56 that requires  
115 environmental review and permitting by the State Corporation Commission. An operator of a small  
116 renewable energy project that is a utility regulated pursuant to Title 56 shall nonetheless be required to  
117 obtain a certificate of public convenience and necessity pursuant to subsection D of § 56-580.

118 § 10.1-1197.9. Enforcement; civil penalties; criminal penalties; injunctive relief.

119 A. Any person violating or failing, neglecting, or refusing to obey any provision of this article, any  
120 regulation, case decision, or order, or any certification or permit-by-rule condition may be compelled to  
121 comply by injunction, mandamus, or other appropriate remedy.

B. Without limiting the remedies that may be obtained under subsection A, any person violating or failing, neglecting, or refusing to obey any regulation, case decision, or order, any provision of this article, or any certification or permit-by-rule condition shall be subject, in the discretion of the court, to a civil penalty not to exceed \$32,500 for each violation. Each day of violation shall constitute a separate offense. Such civil penalties shall be paid into the state treasury and deposited by the State Treasurer into the Virginia Environmental Emergency Response Fund pursuant to Chapter 25 (§ 10.1-2500 et seq.). Such civil penalties may, in the discretion of the court assessing them, be directed to be paid into the treasury of the county, city, or town in which the violation occurred, to be used to abate environmental pollution in such manner as the court may, by order, direct, except that where the person in violation is the county, city, or town itself, or its agent, the court shall direct the penalty to be paid into the state treasury and deposited by the State Treasurer into the Virginia Environmental Emergency Response Fund pursuant to Chapter 25.

C. 1. Nothing in this article shall affect the enforcement authorities in laws administered by the State Air Pollution Control Board, the State Water Control Board, or the Virginia Waste Management Board, nor shall it affect enforcement authorities of the Department as described in § 10.1-1186.

2. The Department is authorized to issue orders to require any person to comply with the provisions of this article, any condition of a permit by rule or certification, or any regulations promulgated by the Department or to comply with any order or case decision, as defined in § 2.2-4001, of the Department. Any such order shall be issued only after a proceeding or hearing in accordance with § 2.2-4019 or § 2.2-4020 with reasonable notice to the affected person of the time, place and purpose thereof. The provisions of this section shall not affect the authority of the Department to issue separate orders and regulations to meet any emergency as described in subsection C 5.

3. With the consent of any person who has violated or failed, neglected or refused to obey any regulation or order of the Department, any condition of a permit by rule, certification or any provision of this article, the Department may provide, in an order issued by the Department against such person, for the payment of civil charges for past violations in specific sums, not to exceed the limits specified in this section. Such civil charges shall be levied instead of any appropriate civil penalty, which could be imposed under this section. Such civil charges shall be paid into the state treasury and deposited by the State Treasurer into the Virginia Environmental Emergency Response Fund pursuant to Chapter 25 of this title.

4. In addition to all other available remedies, the Department may issue administrative orders for the violation of (i) any law or regulation administered by the Department; (ii) any condition of a permit by rule or certificate issued pursuant to this article; or (iii) any case decision or order of the Department. Issuance of an administrative order shall be a case decision as defined in § 2.2-4001 and shall be issued only after a hearing before a hearing officer appointed by the Supreme Court in accordance with § 2.2-4020. Orders issued pursuant to this subsection may include civil penalties of up to \$32,500 per violation not to exceed \$100,000 per order, and may compel the taking of corrective actions or the cessation of any activity upon which the order is based. The Department may assess penalties under this subsection if (a) the person has been issued at least two written notices of alleged violation by the Department for the same or substantially related violations at the same site, (b) such violations have not been resolved by demonstration that there was no violation, by an order issued by the Department or the Director, or by other means, (c) at least 130 days have passed since the issuance of the first notice of alleged violation, and (d) there is a finding that such violations have occurred after a hearing conducted in accordance with this subsection. The actual amount of any penalty assessed shall be based upon the severity of the violations, the extent of any potential or actual environmental harm, the compliance history of the facility or person, any economic benefit realized from the noncompliance, and the ability of the person to pay the penalty. The Department shall provide the person with the calculation for the proposed penalty prior to any hearing conducted for the issuance of an order that assesses penalties pursuant to this subsection. Penalties shall be paid to the state treasury and deposited by the State Treasurer into the Virginia Environmental Emergency Response Fund (§ 10.1-2500 et seq.). The issuance of a notice of alleged violation by the Department shall not be considered a case decision as defined in § 2.2-4001. Any notice of alleged violation shall include a description of each violation, the specific provision of law violated, and information on the process for obtaining a final decision or fact finding from the Department on whether or not a violation has occurred, and nothing in this section shall preclude an owner from seeking such a determination. Orders issued pursuant to this subsection shall become effective five days after having been delivered to the affected persons or mailed by certified mail to the last known address of such persons. The Department shall develop and provide an opportunity for public comment on guidelines and procedures that contain specific criteria for calculating the appropriate penalty for each violation based upon the severity of the violations, the extent of any potential or actual environmental harm, the compliance history of the facility or person, any economic benefit realized from the noncompliance, and the ability of the person to pay the penalty.

183 5. Should the Department find that any person is grossly affecting the public health, safety or  
184 welfare, or the health of animals, fish or aquatic life or the environment, or such effects are imminent,  
185 the Department shall issue, without a hearing, an emergency administrative order directing the person  
186 to cease the activity immediately and undertake any needed corrective action, and shall within 10 days  
187 hold a hearing, after reasonable notice as to the time and place thereof to the person, to affirm, modify,  
188 amend or cancel the emergency administrative order. If the Department finds that a person who has  
189 been issued an administrative order or an emergency administrative order is not complying with the  
190 order's terms, the Department may utilize the enforcement and penalty provisions of this article to  
191 secure compliance.

192 6. The Department shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in any  
193 action brought by the Department under this article in which it substantially prevails on the merits of  
194 the case, unless special circumstances would make an award unjust.

195 D. Any person willfully violating or refusing, failing, or neglecting to comply with any provision of  
196 this article or any regulation, permit by rule, order, or certification under this article shall be guilty of  
197 a Class 1 misdemeanor unless a different penalty is specified.

198 E. In addition to the penalties provided above, any person who knowingly violates or refuses, fails,  
199 or neglects to comply with any provision of this article or any regulation, permit by rule, order, or  
200 certification under this article shall be guilty of a felony punishable by a term of imprisonment of not  
201 less than one year nor more than five years and a fine of not more than \$32,500 for each violation,  
202 either or both. The provisions of this subsection shall be deemed to constitute a lesser included offense  
203 of the violation set forth under subsection F.

204 F. Any person who knowingly violates or refuses, fails, or neglects to comply with any provision of  
205 this article or any regulation, permit by rule, order, or certification under this article and who knows at  
206 the time that he thereby places another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury,  
207 shall, upon conviction, be guilty of a felony punishable by a term of imprisonment of not less than two  
208 years nor more than 15 years and a fine of not more than \$250,000, either or both. A defendant that is  
209 not an individual shall, upon conviction of violating this section, be subject to a fine not exceeding the  
210 greater of \$1 million or an amount that is three times the economic benefit realized by the defendant as  
211 a result of the offense. The maximum penalty shall be doubled with respect to both fine and  
212 imprisonment for any subsequent conviction of the same person.

213 G. Criminal prosecutions under this article shall be commenced within three years after discovery of  
214 the offense, notwithstanding the provisions of any other statute.

215 § 10.1-1197.10. Right of entry to inspect, etc.; warrants.

216 Upon presentation of appropriate credentials and upon consent of the owner or custodian, the  
217 Director or his designee shall have the right to enter at any reasonable time onto any property to  
218 inspect, investigate, evaluate, conduct tests or take samples for testing as he reasonably deems necessary  
219 in order to determine whether the provisions of any law administered by the Director or the  
220 Department, any regulations of the Department, any order of the Department or Director or any  
221 conditions in a permit by rule, license or certificate issued by the Director are being complied with. If  
222 the Director or his designee is denied entry, he may apply to an appropriate circuit court for an  
223 inspection warrant authorizing such investigation, evaluation, inspection, testing or taking of samples for  
224 testing as provided in Chapter 24 (§ 19.2-393 et seq.) of Title 19.2

225 § 10.1-1197.11. Information to be furnished to Department.

226 Except as otherwise specified in this article, the Department may require every owner or operator of  
227 a small renewable energy project to furnish when requested such plans, specifications, and other  
228 pertinent information as may be necessary to determine the compliance status of the project and the  
229 effect of the project on human health or the environment.

230 § 56-46.1. Commission to consider environmental, economic and improvements in service reliability  
231 factors in approving construction of electrical utility facilities; approval required for construction of  
232 certain electrical transmission lines; notice and hearings.

233 A. Whenever the Commission is required to approve the construction of any electrical utility facility,  
234 it shall give consideration to the effect of that facility on the environment and establish such conditions  
235 as may be desirable or necessary to minimize adverse environmental impact. In order to avoid  
236 duplication of governmental activities, any valid permit or approval required for an electric generating  
237 plant and associated facilities issued or granted by a federal, state or local governmental entity charged  
238 by law with responsibility for issuing permits or approvals regulating environmental impact and  
239 mitigation of adverse environmental impact or for other specific public interest issues such as building  
240 codes, transportation plans, and public safety, whether such permit or approval is granted prior to or  
241 after the Commission's decision, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section with respect  
242 to all matters that (i) are governed by the permit or approval or (ii) are within the authority of, and were  
243 considered by, the governmental entity in issuing such permit or approval, and the Commission shall  
244 impose no additional conditions with respect to such matters. Nothing in this section shall affect the

ability of the Commission to keep the record of a case open. Nothing in this section shall affect any right to appeal such permits or approvals in accordance with applicable law. In the case of a proposed facility located in a region that was designated as of July 1, 2001, as serious nonattainment for the one-hour ozone standard as set forth in the federal Clean Air Act, the Commission shall not issue a decision approving such proposed facility that is conditioned upon issuance of any environmental permit or approval. In every proceeding under this subsection, the Commission shall receive and give consideration to all reports that relate to the proposed facility by state agencies concerned with environmental protection; and if requested by any county or municipality in which the facility is proposed to be built, to local comprehensive plans that have been adopted pursuant to Article 3 (§ 15.2-2223 et seq.) of Chapter 22 of Title 15.2. Additionally, the Commission (i) shall consider the effect of the proposed facility on economic development within the Commonwealth and (ii) shall consider any improvements in service reliability that may result from the construction of such facility.

B. No electrical transmission line of 138 kilovolts or more shall be constructed unless the State Corporation Commission shall, after at least thirty days' advance notice by (i) publication in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the counties and municipalities through which the line is proposed to be built, (ii) written notice to the governing body of each such county and municipality, and (iii) causing to be sent a copy of the notice by first class mail to all owners of property within the route of the proposed line, as indicated on the map or sketch of the route filed with the Commission, which requirement shall be satisfied by mailing the notice to such persons at such addresses as are indicated in the land books maintained by the commissioner of revenue, director of finance or treasurer of the county or municipality, approve such line. Such notices shall include a written description of the proposed route the line is to follow, as well as a map or sketch of the route including a digital geographic information system (GIS) map provided by the public utility showing the location of the proposed route. The Commission shall make GIS maps provided under this subsection available to the public on the Commission's website. Such notices shall be in addition to the advance notice to the chief administrative officer of the county or municipality required pursuant to § 15.2-2202. As a condition to approval the Commission shall determine that the line is needed and that the corridor or route the line is to follow will reasonably minimize adverse impact on the scenic assets, historic districts and environment of the area concerned. In making the determinations about need, corridor or route, and method of installation, the Commission shall verify the applicant's load flow modeling, contingency analyses, and reliability needs presented to justify the new line and its proposed method of installation. If the local comprehensive plan of an affected county or municipality designates corridors or routes for electric transmission lines and the line is proposed to be constructed outside such corridors or routes, in any hearing the county or municipality may provide adequate evidence that the existing planned corridors or routes designated in the plan can adequately serve the needs of the company. Additionally, the Commission shall consider, upon the request of the governing body of any county or municipality in which the line is proposed to be constructed, (i) the costs and economic benefits likely to result from requiring the underground placement of the line and (ii) any potential impediments to timely construction of the line.

C. If, prior to such approval, any interested party shall request a public hearing, the Commission shall, as soon as reasonably practicable after such request, hold such hearing or hearings at such place as may be designated by the Commission. In any hearing the public service company shall provide adequate evidence that existing rights-of-way cannot adequately serve the needs of the company.

If, prior to such approval, written requests therefor are received from twenty or more interested parties, the Commission shall hold at least one hearing in the area which would be affected by construction of the line, for the purpose of receiving public comment on the proposal. If any hearing is to be held in the area affected, the Commission shall direct that a copy of the transcripts of any previous hearings held in the case be made available for public inspection at a convenient location in the area for a reasonable time before such local hearing.

D. For purposes of this section, "interested parties" shall include the governing bodies of any counties or municipalities through which the line is proposed to be built, and persons residing or owning property in each such county or municipality and "environment" or "environmental" shall be deemed to include in meaning "historic," as well as a consideration of the probable effects of the line on the health and safety of the persons in the area concerned.

For purposes of this section, "qualifying facilities" means a cogeneration or small power production facility which meets the criteria of 18 C.F.R. Part 292; "public utility" means a public utility as defined in § 56-265.1; and "reasonably accommodate requests to wheel or transmit power" means:

1. That the applicant will make available to new electric generation facilities constructed after January 9, 1991, qualifying facilities and other nonutilities, a minimum of one-fourth of the total megawatts of the additional transmission capacity created by the proposed line, for the purpose of wheeling to public utility purchasers the power generated by such qualifying facilities and other

306 nonutility facilities which are awarded a power purchase contract by a public utility purchaser in  
307 compliance with applicable state law or regulations governing bidding or capacity acquisition programs  
308 for the purchase of electric capacity from nonutility sources, provided that the obligation of the applicant  
309 will extend only to those requests for wheeling service made within the twelve months following  
310 certification by the State Corporation Commission of the transmission line and with effective dates for  
311 commencement of such service within the twelve months following completion of the transmission line.

312 2. That the wheeling service offered by the applicant, pursuant to subdivision D 1 of this section,  
313 will reasonably further the purposes of the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (P. L.  
314 95-617), as demonstrated by submitting to the Commission, with its application for approval of the line,  
315 the cost methodologies, terms, conditions, and dispatch and interconnection requirements the applicant  
316 intends, subject to any applicable requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to include  
317 in its agreements for such wheeling service.

318 E. In the event that, at any time after the giving of the notice required in subsection B of this  
319 section, it appears to the Commission that consideration of a route or routes significantly different from  
320 the route described in the notice is desirable, the Commission shall cause notice of the new route or  
321 routes to be published and mailed in accordance with subsection B of this section. The Commission  
322 shall thereafter comply with the provisions of this section with respect to the new route or routes to the  
323 full extent necessary to give interested parties in the newly affected areas the same protection afforded  
324 interested parties affected by the route described in the original notice.

325 F. Approval of a transmission line pursuant to this section shall be deemed to satisfy the  
326 requirements of § 15.2-2232 and local zoning ordinances with respect to such transmission line.

327 G. The Commission shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of  
328 Environmental Quality regarding the coordination of their reviews of the environmental impact of  
329 electric generating plants and associated facilities.

330 H. An applicant that is required to obtain (i) a certificate of public convenience and necessity from  
331 the Commission for any electric generating facility, electric transmission line, natural or manufactured  
332 gas transmission line as defined in 49 Code of Federal Regulations § 192.3, or natural or manufactured  
333 gas storage facility (hereafter, an energy facility) and (ii) an environmental permit for the energy facility  
334 that is subject to issuance by any agency or board within the Secretariat of Natural Resources, may  
335 request a pre-application planning and review process. In any such request to the Commission or the  
336 Secretariat of Natural Resources, the applicant shall identify the proposed energy facility for which it  
337 requests the pre-application planning and review process. The Commission, the Department of  
338 Environmental Quality, the Marine Resources Commission, the Department of Game and Inland  
339 Fisheries, the Department of Historic Resources, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and  
340 other appropriate agencies of the Commonwealth shall participate in the pre-application planning and  
341 review process. Participation in such process shall not limit the authority otherwise provided by law to  
342 the Commission or other agencies or boards of the Commonwealth. The Commission and other  
343 participating agencies of the Commonwealth may invite federal and local governmental entities charged  
344 by law with responsibility for issuing permits or approvals to participate in the pre-application planning  
345 and review process. Through the pre-application planning and review process, the applicant, the  
346 Commission, and other agencies and boards shall identify the potential impacts and approvals that may  
347 be required and shall develop a plan that will provide for an efficient and coordinated review of the  
348 proposed energy facility. The plan shall include (a) a list of the permits or other approvals likely to be  
349 required based on the information available, (b) a specific plan and preliminary schedule for the  
350 different reviews, (c) a plan for coordinating those reviews and the related public comment process, and  
351 (d) designation of points of contact, either within each agency or for the Commonwealth as a whole, to  
352 facilitate this coordination. The plan shall be made readily available to the public and shall be  
353 maintained on a dedicated website to provide current information on the status of each component of the  
354 plan and each approval process including opportunities for public comment.

355 I. *The provisions of this section shall not apply to the construction and operation of a small*  
356 *renewable energy project, as defined in § 10.1-1197.5, by a utility regulated pursuant to this title for*  
357 *which the Department of Environmental Quality has issued a permit by rule pursuant to Article 5*  
358 *(§ 10.1-1197.5 et seq.) of Chapter 11.1 of Title 10.1.*

359 § 56-580. Transmission and distribution of electric energy.

360 A. Subject to the provisions of § 56-585.1, the Commission shall continue to regulate pursuant to this  
361 title the distribution of retail electric energy to retail customers in the Commonwealth and, to the extent  
362 not prohibited by federal law, the transmission of electric energy in the Commonwealth.

363 B. The Commission shall continue to regulate, to the extent not prohibited by federal law, the  
364 reliability, quality and maintenance by transmitters and distributors of their transmission and retail  
365 distribution systems.

366 C. The Commission shall develop codes of conduct governing the conduct of incumbent electric  
367 utilities and affiliates thereof when any such affiliates provide, or control any entity that provides,

generation, distribution, or transmission services, to the extent necessary to prevent impairment of competition. Nothing in this chapter shall prevent an incumbent electric utility from offering metering options to its customers.

D. The Commission shall permit the construction and operation of electrical generating facilities in Virginia upon a finding that such generating facility and associated facilities (i) will have no material adverse effect upon reliability of electric service provided by any regulated public utility, (ii) are required by the public convenience and necessity, if a petition for such permit is filed after July 1, 2007, and if they are to be constructed and operated by any regulated utility whose rates are regulated pursuant to § 56-585.1, and (iii) are not otherwise contrary to the public interest. In review of a petition for a certificate to construct and operate a generating facility described in this subsection, the Commission shall give consideration to the effect of the facility and associated facilities on the environment and establish such conditions as may be desirable or necessary to minimize adverse environmental impact as provided in § 56-46.1, *unless exempt as a small renewable energy project for which the Department of Environmental Quality has issued a permit by rule pursuant to Article 5 (§ 10.1-1197.5 et seq.) of Chapter 11.1 of Title 10.1*. In order to avoid duplication of governmental activities, any valid permit or approval required for an electric generating plant and associated facilities issued or granted by a federal, state or local governmental entity charged by law with responsibility for issuing permits or approvals regulating environmental impact and mitigation of adverse environmental impact or for other specific public interest issues such as building codes, transportation plans, and public safety, whether such permit or approval is prior to or after the Commission's decision, shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section with respect to all matters that (i) are governed by the permit or approval or (ii) are within the authority of, and were considered by, the governmental entity in issuing such permit or approval, and the Commission shall impose no additional conditions with respect to such matters. Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of the Commission to keep the record of a case open. Nothing in this section shall affect any right to appeal such permits or approvals in accordance with applicable law. In the case of a proposed facility located in a region that was designated as of July 1, 2001, as serious nonattainment for the one-hour ozone standard as set forth in the federal Clean Air Act, the Commission shall not issue a decision approving such proposed facility that is conditioned upon issuance of any environmental permit or approval. *The Commission shall complete any proceeding under this section, or under any provision of the Utility Facilities Act (§ 56-265.1 et seq.), involving an application for a certificate, permit, or approval required for the construction or operation by a public utility of a small renewable energy project as defined in § 10.1-1197.5, within nine months following the utility's submission of a complete application therefore. Small renewable energy projects as defined in § 10.1-1197.5 are in the public interest and in determining whether to approve such project, the Commission shall liberally construe the provisions of this title.*

E. Nothing in this section shall impair the distribution service territorial rights of incumbent electric utilities, and incumbent electric utilities shall continue to provide distribution services within their exclusive service territories as established by the Commission. Subject to the provisions of § 56-585.1, the Commission shall continue to exercise its existing authority over the provision of electric distribution services to retail customers in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, the authority contained in Chapters 10 (§ 56-232 et seq.) and 10.1 (§ 56-265.1 et seq.) of this title.

F. Nothing in this chapter shall impair the exclusive territorial rights of an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality as of July 1, 1999, or by an authority created by a governmental unit exempt from the referendum requirement of § 15.2-5403. Nor shall any provision of this chapter apply to any such electric utility unless (i) that municipality or that authority created by a governmental unit exempt from the referendum requirement of § 15.2-5403 elects to have this chapter apply to that utility or (ii) that utility, directly or indirectly, sells, offers to sell or seeks to sell electric energy to any retail customer eligible to purchase electric energy from any supplier in accordance with § 56-577 if that retail customer is outside the geographic area that was served by such municipality as of July 1, 1999, except (a) any area within the municipality that was served by an incumbent public utility as of that date but was thereafter served by an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality or by an authority created by a governmental unit exempt from the referendum requirement of § 15.2-5403 pursuant to the terms of a franchise agreement between the municipality and the incumbent public utility, or (b) where the geographic area served by an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality is changed pursuant to mutual agreement between the municipality and the affected incumbent public utility in accordance with § 56-265.4:1. If an electric utility owned or operated by a municipality as of July 1, 1999, or by an authority created by a governmental unit exempt from the referendum requirement of § 15.2-5403 is made subject to the provisions of this chapter pursuant to clause (i) or (ii) of this subsection, then in such event the provisions of this chapter applicable to incumbent electric utilities shall also apply to any such utility, mutatis mutandis.

429 G. The applicability of all provisions of this chapter except § 56-594 to any investor-owned  
430 incumbent electric utility supplying electric service to retail customers on January 1, 2003, whose  
431 service territory assigned to it by the Commission is located entirely within Dickenson, Lee, Russell,  
432 Scott, and Wise Counties shall be suspended effective July 1, 2003, so long as such utility does not  
433 provide retail electric services in any other service territory in any jurisdiction to customers who have  
434 the right to receive retail electric energy from another supplier. During any such suspension period, the  
435 utility's rates shall be (i) its capped rates established pursuant to § 56-582 for the duration of the capped  
436 rate period established thereunder, and (ii) determined thereafter by the Commission on the basis of such  
437 utility's prudently incurred costs pursuant to Chapter 10 (§ 56-232 et seq.) of this title.

438 H. The expiration date of any certificates granted by the Commission pursuant to subsection D, for  
439 which applications were filed with the Commission prior to July 1, 2002, shall be extended for an  
440 additional two years from the expiration date that otherwise would apply.

441 **2. That the provisions of this act may result in a net increase in periods of imprisonment or**  
442 **commitment. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot**  
443 **be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities and is \$0 for**  
444 **periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.**

445 **3. That the provisions of this act shall not apply to any small renewable energy project that has**  
446 **applied for or been granted approval by the State Corporation Commission prior to the effective**  
447 **date of regulations promulgated by the Department of Environmental Quality, as set forth in this**  
448 **act; provided, however, that a small renewable energy project that has not yet received a final**  
449 **order from the State Corporation Commission shall not be precluded from withdrawing its**  
450 **application at the State Corporation Commission and filing without prejudice with the Department**  
451 **of Environmental Quality for a permit-by-rule pursuant to this act.**