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State Report Calls for Increased Support for Biofuels in MA

April 23, 2008 – A report recommending several biofuel policy initiatives for Massachusetts, including an exemption from the state’s gas tax for cellulosic ethanol and a blending requirement for biodiesel, received the endorsement from Congressman William Delahunt and the state’s only nonprofit organization representing the major advanced biofuel companies in Massachusetts.

“I want to commend the members of the Massachusetts Advanced Biofuels Task Force for establishing a pragmatic and visionary roadmap for the state to reduce its dependence on foreign oil, create clean energy jobs, and address the growing problem of climate change,” said Delahunt. “While our companies conduct the research and development necessary to bring advanced biofuels to market, the state must focus its energies on creating the infrastructure and demand necessary for these companies to thrive.”

Authored by the Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs office, the report offers several recommendations that will reduce the Commonwealth’s dependence on oil, increase local economic development, and improve the environment and public health.

Specifically, the report calls for the state and region to adopt a Low Carbon Fuels Standard, a policy that would significantly reduce the amount of carbon in transportation and home heating fuels by date certain. It also would require all diesel fuel sold in the state for heating and transportation use to contain 5 percent biodiesel by 2013. Furthermore, it would exempt cellulosic ethanol from state gasoline taxes.

“Congress made a bold commitment to advanced biofuels when they passed a new Renewable Fuel Standard in December,” said Brooke Coleman, Director of the New Fuels Alliance, noting that federal law now requires 21 billion gallons of advanced biofuel use per year by 2022. “Massachusetts has one of the largest clusters of advanced biofuel companies in the country, but if we are to seize this opportunity the Legislature must move swiftly and effectively to make this vision a reality.”

According to Coleman, who advised the Massachusetts Advanced Biofuels Task Force, biofuels can play a substantial role in reducing carbon and other harmful pollutants.

“Advanced biofuels companies located right here in the Commonwealth and their investors are looking for state leadership. This report will be welcome news to those who are actively working to reduce our use of petroleum,” said Andrew Schuyler, director of the Northeast Biofuels Collaborative. Schuyler added that much of the recent coverage of biofuels has been misleading. “While biofuels have been blamed for driving food prices higher, the truth is nothing poses a bigger threat to grocery aisle prices than the skyrocketing price of oil.”

The report is the product of a Massachusetts Advanced Biofuels Task Force that was established last fall by the Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House and Delahunt. The Northeast Biofuels Collaborative worked closely with these offices and authored initial findings that were used to advance the biofuels topic. (The report can be viewed at www.nebiofuels.org). The Northeast Biofuels Collaborative is a nonprofit based in Boston and is a project of the New Fuels Alliance.

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