

MIRS Capitol Capsule
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Will Energy Package Split?

One of the things legislative observers will be watching in the early months of the 2008 House session is whether or not the tie-bars on the energy package will hold up.

Recall that the various alternative energy bills are currently tie-barred to [HB 5524](#), legislation that would basically do away with Michigan's Electric Choice Act, which was designed to create competition in the electric utility market.

Opponents of [HB 5524](#), including Attorney General Mike [COX](#), argue that it would basically return the state's two giant utilities, Consumers Energy and Detroit Edison, to their previous monopoly status. Finding a formula to make [HB 5524](#) passable has been an ongoing start-and-stop process for the past year — a process that's been more stop than start.

And as long as the alternative energy bills are linked to [HB 5524](#), they're stuck in a legislative quagmire, as well. But some insiders think that may all change this spring.

Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) is expected to talk-up alternative energy in her State of the State Address on Jan. 29. Alternative energy, particularly the alternative energy portfolio measure, has recently become Granholm's favorite economic development topic.

If there's one thing she seems likely to call on the Legislature to do before the legislative year unravels into election-inspired non-accomplishments, it's likely to be the alternative energy package. Ergo, if agreement can't be reached soon on [HB 5524](#), changes are that there will be a great deal of pressure brought to bear to get rid of the ties-bars so the alternative energy bills can get to Granholm's desk — at least this is the theory.

However, House Energy and Technology Committee Chair Frank [ACCAVITTI](#) (D-Eastpointe) told *MIRS* today that he doesn't believe the tie-bars will have to be broken, in part, because agreement will be reached very soon on [HB 5524](#).

"I have met with my counterpart on the Republican side, Rep. Mike [NOFS](#) (R-Battle Creek) and I think we're very close to having a bill everyone can agree to," Accavitti said. "In fact, I think we could pass it out of committee as soon as next week. So it could actually be on the House calendar when the Governor gives her State of the State address."

That said, Accavitti also admitted that what would happen to the package if it were to get over to the Senate is pretty much a mystery. In order to get the 10 percent renewable portfolio standard bill (HB 4562) to the Governor by Jan. 29 would require the Senate to move with uncharacteristic dispatch on pretty complicated, divisive legislation.

But Accavitti argued that the tie-bars to the Electric Choice repeal bill ([HB 5524](#)) are helping to prop up support for the alternative energy bills.

"I think the last thing we should do is break the tie-bars," Accavitti said. "When you have something like this; that you've been negotiating on for months . . . there are so many agreements involved . . . I think all good will and trust would go down the tubes."