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It's make or break for some industries

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With the promise of higher energy bills, Pennsylvania consumers and businesses have a big stake in proposals being hashed out at the Capitol.

The two main plans are Gov. Ed Rendell's \$850 million plan and Senate Republicans \$650 million plan. Both would invest in alternative and renewable energy companies and consumer conservation efforts. A special session has been under way since September. The governor has asked for some movement by the end of the year, but prospects for consensus aren't clear.

Several companies involved in the alternative and renewable energy sector have a lot riding on the result. The state's plan would guide their decisions on whether to create jobs in Pennsylvania or go elsewhere. For other groups, such as biodiesel producers, the legislation could help their fledgling companies remain open or lead to them closing.

A recent study by the American Solar Energy Society, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group, suggests that 8.5 million Americans are already employed in renewable energy and energy efficiency industries. The group's study predicts that as many as 40 million jobs nationwide could be created in that sector by 2030.

In Pennsylvania, nearly 3,000 jobs have been created in the state's renewable and alternative energy sector since the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004 was passed, according to the governor's office.

The governor's office estimates that his latest proposal could create 13,000 jobs. The state Department of Environmental Protection developed that estimate, which is not broken down by industry. The agency based its projection on three reports that gave varying job figures.

For a look at what some of the alternative and renewable energy companies have to say about the two main proposals under consideration, see Page C7.

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