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ASSEMBLYMEMBER AGUIAR-CURRY TO LEAD BI-PARTISAN DELEGATION TO PORTUGAL

California Leaders to Examine Offshore Wind Power, Climate Change Policy, and Drug Decriminalization

SACRAMENTO – This week, Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) will lead a bi-partisan delegation to Portugal to study offshore wind energy and explore opportunities to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The delegation will also learn about Portugal’s groundbreaking drug decriminalization program that is credited with dramatic reductions in drug addiction, drug-related deaths, crimes, and homelessness.

The research tour is organized by the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE), and the delegation is made up of state legislators and key agency officials, environmental and labor leaders, local government and business executives, and public policy experts. No taxpayer funds are being used.

“Portugal is a global leader in the deployment of floating offshore wind platforms and wind energy. This is an incredible opportunity for us to learn from their experience as this technology comes to California,” said Asm. Aguiar-Curry. “I look forward to learning how these projects are installed and operated in an environmentally responsible manner, and how they will lead to the creation of high paying local jobs in the construction, management and maintenance of these advanced facilities.”

Asm. Aguiar-Curry is a descendent of Portuguese immigrants and knows firsthand the unique connection shared by California and Portugal. The Assemblymember is a respected community leader and an acknowledged problem solver, helping to address complex issues such as rural broadband deployment, affordable housing, agriculture, health services, and more. She is the chair of the Assembly’s Local Government Committee.

“Portugal has cracked the code on harnessing offshore wind energy found far away from coastal shores,” said CFEE President & CEO Jay Hansen. “Offshore wind blows stronger and for longer periods of time. These immense reserves of abundant clean energy were once inaccessible. Now, California is primed to follow Portugal’s lead, install similar projects in our own deep ocean waters and tap into this powerful source of clean energy.”

With the recent passage of AB525 (Chiu, D-San Francisco; Cunningham, R-San Luis Obispo; and Friedman, D-Glendale), California has taken the first steps to developing offshore wind power by evaluating how it can deliver benefits for ratepayers, grid reliability, decarbonization, and employment. The Energy Commission is tasked with working with the Coastal Commission,

the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, the Ocean Protection Council, and other federal, state and local agencies to develop a plan.

The CFEE Study Travel Project, which will run October 16-26, will consist of site visits and facility tours as well as meetings with Portugal's elected and appointed officials and environmental, labor, business, and community leaders.

The delegation will also meet with Portuguese healthcare leaders, who have pioneered one of the world's most successful drug decriminalization programs. Their approach has resulted in steep declines in drug-related deaths, crimes, and addiction to levels well below other European and western countries.

Hansen noted, "After years of suffering through a seemingly endless drug epidemic, Portugal shifted its policy away from criminalizing drug users and toward a health-led approach that treats users as patients, rather than criminals. This method has proven to be remarkably successful, perhaps offering a model for California as our own opioid crisis continues to worsen."

The group will also meet with business, civil sector, and European Union representatives to hear about the latest policy options that Europe is developing to more aggressively curb greenhouse gas emissions. Discussion topics will include direct air carbon capture technologies, carbon pricing for imported commodities, and more.

"As the impacts of climate change continue to strike closer to home, we have an urgent responsibility to work with other countries on the front lines of tackling climate change," Hansen said. "This Study Tour is an important opportunity to fine-tune our climate policies by learning from our Portuguese counterparts, sharing best practices, and, when prudent, coordinating our actions to amplify their effect to the fullest extent."

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An independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)3, the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy has convened state leaders for more than four decades to examine critical issues related to California's environment, with a view toward building consensus around long-term solutions. CFEE's bipartisan forums and study travel projects put a diverse cross-section of California leaders into direct contact with their counterparts around the world. This sharing of views and experiences leads to a broader understanding of complex issues and encourages the exchange of policy and technology ideas while also promoting what makes California special.