

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE – 3/22/16

DeLEO SEES MEETING OF SOLAR CONFERENCE CHANCE TO "PUT IT TO REST"

The House and Senate could be nearing a deal on legislation to extend incentives for solar energy installation as negotiators plan to sit down this week in a sign that House Speaker Robert DeLeo said Monday could be indicative of a breakthrough in talks that have been ongoing since November. "I know that they have exchanged proposals," DeLeo said of the six-member conference committee. "I think they feel that they're fairly close relative to the exchange of proposals, but they're hopeful that maybe getting together may be able to hopefully put it to rest." DeLeo said he believes the conference committee plans to meet this week. The committee's members -- Reps. Brian Dempsey, Thomas Golden and Bradley Jones and Sens. Benjamin Downing, Marc Pacheco and Bruce Tarr -- have had the two solar bills (H 3854/S 2058) before them since November. Two bills have been reported out of conference committees this month. One addressing opioid addiction has been signed into law. The other repealing an automatic driver's license suspension for drug offenders is set to be taken up by the House on Wednesday. Gov. Charlie Baker said last week that he expects solar legislation "to be dealt with separately" from a more comprehensive energy bill that DeLeo has said he hopes to debate in April. "I don't think it's going to be a part of the big bill," Baker said during his monthly interview on WGBH Radio. "I'm optimistic that it will be reported out reasonably soon, but the thing people need to remember about solar is because it's intermittent, it won't help us with our baseload, the turn-on-the-lights. It's a terrific alternative for people who have the ability the resources and the assets to put it to use for their own benefit, but in terms of being something that can actually help power the grid that supports all the rest of us, day-in, day-out 24/7 365, it's not part of the answer to that, which something like natural gas is." - Katie Lannan/SHNS