

1 **Senate Bill No. 520**

2 (By Senators Walters, Blair, Miller, Snyder and Woelfel)

3

4 [Introduced February 19, 2015; referred to the Committee on Government Organization; and then

5

to the Committee on Finance.]

6

7

8

9

10 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,

11 designated §5B-2I-1, §5B-2I-2, §5B-2I-3, §5B-2I-4, §5B-2I-5, §5B-2I-6 and §5B-2I-7, all

12 relating to authorizing local units of government to adopt local energy efficiency partnership

13 programs and to create districts to promote the use of energy efficiency improvements by

14 owners of certain real property; providing for financing of programs through voluntary

15 property assessments, commercial lending and other means; authorizing local unit of

16 government to issue bonds, notes and other evidences of indebtedness and to pay the cost of

17 energy efficiency improvements from the proceeds thereof; providing for the repayment of

18 bonds, notes and other evidences of indebtedness; authorizing certain fees; prescribing

19 powers and duties of certain governmental officers and entities; and providing remedies.

20 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

21 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new

22 article, designated §5B-2I-1, §5B-2I-2, §5B-2I-3, §5B-2I-4, §5B-2I-5, §5B-2I-6 and §5B-2I-7, all

1 to read as follows:

2 **ARTICLE 2I. LOCAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP ACT.**

3 **§5B-2I-1. Short title.**

4 This article shall be known and may be cited as the "Local Energy Efficiency Partnership
5 Act".

6 **§5B-2I-2. Definitions.**

7 As used in this article:

8 (1) "District" means a district created under a local energy efficiency partnership program by
9 a local unit of government that lies within the local unit of government's jurisdictional boundaries.
10 A local unit of government may create more than one district under the program, and districts may
11 be separate, overlapping or coterminous.

12 (2) "Energy efficiency improvement" means equipment, devices, or materials intended to
13 decrease energy consumption, including, but not limited to:

14 (A) Insulation in walls, roofs, floors, foundations or heating and cooling distribution systems;

15 (B) Storm windows and doors; multiglazed windows and doors; heat-absorbing or
16 heat-reflective glazed and coated window and door systems; and additional glazing, reductions in
17 glass area, and other window and door system modifications that reduce energy consumption;

18 (C) Automated energy control systems;

19 (D) Heating, ventilating or air-conditioning and distribution system modifications or
20 replacements;

21 (E) Caulking, weather-stripping and air sealing;

22 (F) Replacement or modification of lighting fixtures to reduce the energy use of the lighting

1 system;

2 (G) Energy recovery systems;

3 (H) Daylighting systems;

4 (I) Installation or upgrade of electrical wiring or outlets to charge a motor vehicle that is fully
5 or partially powered by electricity;

6 (J) Measures to reduce the usage of water or increases the efficiency of water usage;

7 (K) Any other installation or modification of equipment, devices, or materials approved as
8 a utility cost-savings measure by the governing body.

9 (3) "Energy project" means the installation or modification of an energy efficiency
10 improvement.

11 (4) "Governing body" means the county commission of a county, or the council or other
12 similar elected legislative body of a municipality.

13 (5) "Local unit of government" means a county or municipality.

14 (6) "Person" means an individual, firm, partnership, association, corporation, unincorporated
15 joint venture, or trust, organized, permitted, or existing under the laws of this state or any other state,
16 including a federal corporation, or a combination thereof. However, person does not include a local
17 unit of government.

18 (7) "Property" means privately owned commercial or industrial real property located within
19 the local unit of government.

20 (8) "Local energy efficiency partnership program" or "program" means a program as
21 described in section three of this article.

22 (9) "Record owner" means the person or persons possessed of the most recent fee title or land

1 contract vendee's interest in property as shown by the records of the clerk of the county commission.

2 **§5B-2I-3. Establishment of local energy efficiency partnership program.**

3 (a) Pursuant to the procedures set forth in this section, a local unit of government may
4 establish a local energy efficiency partnership program and may, from time to time, create a district
5 or districts under the program.

6 (b) Under a program, the local unit of government may enter into a contract with the record
7 owner of property within a district to finance or refinance one or more energy projects on the
8 property. The contract may provide for the repayment of the cost of an energy project through
9 assessments upon the property benefitted. The financing or refinancing may include the cost of
10 materials and labor necessary for installation, permit fees, inspection fees, application and
11 administrative fees, bank fees, and all other fees that may be incurred by the record owner pursuant
12 to the installation on a specific or pro rata basis, as determined by the local unit of government.

13 (c) To establish a local energy efficiency partnership program, the governing body of a local
14 unit of government shall take the following actions in the following order:

15 (1) Adopt a resolution of intent that includes all of the following:

16 (A) A finding that the financing of energy projects is a valid public purpose;

17 (B) A statement of intent to provide funds for energy projects, which may be repaid by
18 assessments on the property benefitted, with the agreement of the record owners;

19 (C) A description of the proposed arrangements for financing the program;

20 (D) The types of energy projects that may be financed;

21 (E) Reference to a report on the proposed program as described in section four of this article,

22 and a location where the report is available pursuant to section four of this article; and

1 (F) The time and place for a public hearing on the proposed program;

2 (2) Hold a public hearing at which the public may comment on the proposed program,
3 including the report required by section four of this article;

4 (3) Adopt a resolution establishing the program and setting forth its terms and conditions,
5 including all of the following:

6 (A) Matters required by section four of this article to be included in the report; for this
7 purpose, the resolution may incorporate the report or an amended version thereof by reference; and

8 (B) A description of which aspects of the program may be amended without a new public
9 hearing and which aspects may be amended only after a new public hearing is held.

10 (d) A local energy efficiency partnership program may be amended by resolution of the
11 governing body. Adoption of the resolution shall be preceded by a public hearing if required pursuant
12 to subdivision (3), subsection (c) of this section.

13 **§5B-2I-4. Report requirements on proposed local energy efficiency partnership program.**

14 (a) The report on the proposed program required under section three of this article shall
15 include all of the following:

16 (1) A form of contract between the local unit of government and record owner governing the
17 terms and conditions of financing and assessment under the program;

18 (2) Identification of an official authorized to enter into a program contract on behalf of the
19 local unit of government;

20 (3) A maximum aggregate annual dollar amount for all financing to be provided by the local
21 unit of government under the program;

22 (4) An application process and eligibility requirements for financing energy projects under

1 the program;

2 (5) A method for determining interest rates on assessment installments, repayment periods,
3 and the maximum amount of an assessment.

4 (6) Explanation of how assessments will be made and collected consistent with section five
5 of this article;

6 (7) A plan for raising capital to finance improvements under the program. The plan may
7 include any of the following:

8 (A) The sale of bonds or notes, subject to appropriate laws and rules;

9 (B) Amounts to be advanced by the local unit of government through funds available to it
10 from any other source; or

11 (C) Owner-arranged financing from a commercial lender; under owner-arranged financing,
12 the local unit of government may impose an assessment pursuant to section five of this article and
13 forward payments to the commercial lender or the record owner may pay the commercial lender
14 directly;

15 (8) Information regarding all of the following, to the extent known, or procedures to
16 determine the following in the future:

17 (A) Any reserve fund or funds to be used as security for bonds or notes described in
18 subdivision (7) of this section;

19 (B) Any application, administration, or other program fees to be charged to record owners
20 participating in the program that will be used to finance costs incurred by the local unit of
21 government as a result of the program;

22 (9) A requirement that the term of an assessment not exceed the useful life of the energy

1 project paid for by the assessment;

2 (10) A requirement for an appropriate ratio of the amount of the assessment to the assessed
3 value of the property;

4 (11) A requirement that the record owner of property subject to a mortgage obtain written
5 consent from the mortgage holder before participating in the program;

6 (12) Provisions for marketing and participant education;

7 (13) Provisions for adequate debt service reserve fund;

8 (14) Quality assurance and antifraud measures;

9 (15) A requirement that a baseline energy audit be conducted before an energy project is
10 undertaken, to establish future energy savings. After the energy project is completed, the local unit
11 of government shall obtain verification that the energy efficiency improvement was properly
12 installed and is operating as intended;

13 (16) For an energy project financed with more than \$250,000 in assessments, both of the
14 following:

15 (A) A requirement for ongoing measurements that establish the savings realized by the record
16 owner from the energy project; and

17 (B) A requirement that, in the contract for installation of the energy project, the contractor
18 guarantee to the record owner that the energy project will achieve a savings-to-investment ratio
19 greater than one and agree to pay the record owner, on an annual basis, any shortfall in savings below
20 this level.

21 (b) The local unit of government shall make the report available for review on the local unit
22 of government's website or at the office of the clerk or the official authorized to enter contracts on

1 behalf of the local unit of government under the local energy efficiency partnership program.

2 **§5B-2I-5. Assessment imposed under a local energy efficiency partnership program.**

3 (a) A local unit of government may impose an assessment under a local energy efficiency
4 partnership program only pursuant to a written contract with the record owner of the property to be
5 assessed.

6 (b) Before entering into a contract with a record owner under a program, the local unit of
7 government shall verify all of the following:

8 (1) That there are no delinquent taxes, special assessments, or water or sewer charges on the
9 property; and

10 (2) That there are no delinquent assessments on the property under a local energy efficiency
11 partnership program.

12 (c) An assessment imposed under a local energy efficiency partnership program, including
13 any interest on the assessment and any penalty, is a lien against the property on which the assessment
14 is imposed until the assessment, including any interest or penalty, is paid in full. The lien runs with
15 the property and has the same priority and status as other property tax and assessment liens. The local
16 unit of government has all rights in the case of delinquency in the payment of an assessment as it
17 does with respect to delinquent property taxes. When the assessment, including any interest and
18 penalty, is paid, the lien shall be removed from the property.

19 (d) Installments of assessments due under a program shall be included in each property tax
20 bill and shall be collected at the same time and in the same manner as property taxes collected
21 according to article one, chapter eleven-a of this code. Alternatively, installments may be billed and
22 collected as provided in a special assessment ordinance of general applicability adopted by the local

1 unit of government pursuant to state law or local charter.

2 **§5B-2I-6. Issuance of bonds.**

3 (a) A local unit of government may issue bonds or notes to finance energy projects under a
4 local energy efficiency partnership program.

5 (b) Bonds or notes issued under subsection (a) of this section may not be general obligations
6 of the local unit of government, but shall be secured by one or more of the following as provided by
7 the governing body in the resolution or ordinance approving the bonds or notes:

8 (1) Payments of assessments on benefitted property within the district or districts specified;

9 (2) Reserves established by the local unit of government from grants, bond or note proceeds,
10 or other lawfully available funds;

11 (3) Municipal bond insurance, lines or letters of credit, public or private guaranties, standby
12 bond purchase agreements, collateral assignments, mortgages, and any other available means of
13 providing credit support or liquidity;

14 (4) Tax increment revenues that may be lawfully available for such purposes; or

15 (5) Any other amounts lawfully available for such purposes.

16 (c) A pledge of assessments, funds, or contractual rights made by a governing body in
17 connection with the issuance of bonds or notes by a local unit of government under this article
18 constitutes a statutory lien on the assessments, funds, or contractual rights so pledged in favor of the
19 person or persons to whom the pledge is given, without further action by the governing body. The
20 statutory lien is valid and binding against all other persons, with or without notice.

21 (d) Bonds or notes of one series issued under this article may be secured on a parity with
22 bonds or notes of another series issued by the local unit of government pursuant to the terms of a

1 master indenture or master resolution entered into or adopted by the governing body of the local unit
2 of government.

3 (e) Bonds or notes issued under this article, and interest payable on such bonds and notes,
4 are exempt from all taxation by this state and its political subdivisions.

5 (f) Bonds or notes issued under this article further essential public and governmental
6 purposes, including, but not limited to, reduced energy costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions,
7 economic stimulation and development, improved property valuation, and increased employment.

8 **§5B-2I-7. Joint implementation of programs.**

9 (a) A local unit of government may join with any other local unit of government, or with any
10 person, or with any number or combination thereof, by contract or otherwise as may be permitted
11 by law, for the implementation of a local energy efficiency partnership program, in whole or in part.

12 (b) If a local energy efficiency partnership program is implemented jointly by two or more
13 local units of government pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, a single public hearing held
14 jointly by the cooperating local units of government is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of
15 subdivision (2), subsection (c), section three of this article.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize local units of government to adopt local energy efficiency partnership programs and to create districts to promote the use of energy efficiency improvements by owners of certain real property; to provide for the financing of such programs through voluntary property assessments, commercial lending, and other means; to authorize a local unit of government to issue bonds, notes, and other evidences of indebtedness and to pay the cost of energy efficiency improvements from the proceeds thereof; to provide for the repayment of bonds, notes, and other evidences of indebtedness; to authorize certain fees; to prescribe the powers and duties of certain governmental officers and entities; and to provide remedies.

This article 2I is new; therefore, strike-throughs and underscoring have been omitted.