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California lawmaker wants \$1 billion bond for offshore wind

A California lawmaker on Thursday proposed raising \$1 billion for offshore wind infrastructure. | Michael Dwyer/AP



BY **WES VENTEICHER**

SACRAMENTO, California — Jostling over the Legislature’s \$16 billion climate bond push intensified Thursday when Assemblymember Rick Zbur announced his own proposal for a \$1 billion bond to build out California ports to support offshore wind power.

The big climate bonds under discussion in the Capitol mention everything from wildfire and drought measures to money for fish, parks and ranches, with \$2 billion set aside for clean energy projects, but they don't specify offshore wind. The Los Angeles Democrat said he wants the resource included in the “range of bonds that may be put on the ballot” in November, citing its importance for California to reach its 2030 climate goals.

Why it matters: California is aiming to lead the world with its efforts to wean itself off fossil fuels in favor of carbon-free sources of electricity, but the transition is expensive. A climate bond would augment the state’s roughly \$50 billion climate investment of two years ago.

Background: Gov. Gavin Newsom first floated a climate bond in a budget press conference a year ago to help offset cuts he proposed making to climate spending as the state faced a deficit. Lawmakers ended up fending off many of those cuts, but the idea of a bond lived on.

Those bonds are now outlined in Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia’s [CA AB1567 \(23R\)](#) and Sen. Ben Allen’s [CA SB867 \(23R\)](#). Zbur's proposal is [CA AB2208 \(23R\)](#).

While the bills still say \$16 billion, [Garcia has said](#) negotiations are steering the total closer to \$10 billion.

A recent report from the California Energy Commission estimated investments of \$11 billion to \$12 billion would be needed to prepare the ports of Long Beach and Humboldt Bay to erect the 1,100-foot turbines that would be tugged out to sea under California’s plans. The federal government recently announced a \$427 million grant to help develop a terminal in Humboldt Bay.

“This \$1 billion is just a down payment, albeit an important one,” Zbur said Thursday. “It’s a signal of the state’s commitment to offshore wind, one that we hope will catalyze strategies for both public and private investments that will be required to fully fund the cost to improve our ports.”

The state is counting on offshore wind from leased federal waters to provide enough energy to power roughly 25 million homes by 2045. It’s central to the state’s goal of net-zero emissions because wind turbines can keep funneling power to the grid after the sun sets and solar power drops off.

What’s next: Any bond will need signoff from the Newsom administration. Zbur said Thursday that he hasn’t had specific discussions with the administration over bond money for offshore wind. He said he thinks the administration is waiting on the Senate and Assembly to figure out what they want from bonds before engaging.