

Biomass Thermal Utilization (BTU) Act of 2021 (S.1191, H.R.3251)

House Co-sponsors: Representatives Kuster (D-NH), Kelly (R-PA), Welch (D-VT), Pappas (D-NH), Garamendi (D-CA), Pingree (D-ME), Carter (R-GA), Golden (D-ME), McKinley (R-WV), Courtney (D-CT), Keller (R-PA), Thompson (R-PA)
Senate Co-sponsors: Senators King (I-ME), Collins (R-ME), Shaheen (D-NH), Hassan (D-NH), Murkowski (R-AK)

What is thermal biomass?



A thermal biomass system is a stove, furnace or boiler that runs on plant-derived fuel available on a renewable or recurring basis, including agricultural crops and trees, wood and wood waste and residues, plants (including aquatic plants), grasses, residues, and fibers. The system produces thermal energy for heating residential and commercial spaces, as well as process heat for industrial applications.



Wood pellets, chips and cordwood are the most common fuels for biomass heating systems, although agricultural wastes will see growth in the future. Wood pellets are generally made from wood waste, compressed under heat and pressure, with no additives. They have high energy density,

low moisture content, and are as easy to transport and use as traditional fossil fuels. Wood chips offer a slightly less refined form of biomass fuel.

Advanced combustion technologies allow the use of biomass fuels with very high efficiencies and low emissions. Leading technologies have been developed in Europe, and are now entering the U.S. market. Domestic U.S. manufacturers are also developing advanced technologies.



A biomass thermal system can provide hot air, water, and process heat

What are the economic and environmental benefits of renewable thermal biomass?



These technologies utilize sustainably harvested fuels and feedstocks that support forest- and agricultural-based economic development in rural regions. Many rural regions are dependent on expensive fossil heating fuels such as oil, natural gas and propane. Locally produced biomass fuels can displace dependence on high carbon intensity fossil fuels, thereby keeping fuel dollars local and greatly reducing heating costs.

Thermal biomass systems provide markets for hazardous fuels contributing to catastrophic wildfires. Removing these hazardous fuels improves forest health and carbon stocks, particularly those most impacted by insects, disease and drought.

Wood pellet and chip manufacturing, as well as dedicated production of agricultural feedstocks for thermal applications can

help revitalize economies in regions that have been impacted by decline in forest or agriculture industries. Biomass thermal creates and helps retain jobs.

Biomass fuels are low carbon and result in net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions when displacing high carbon intensity fuels. In addition, the use of wood fuels reduces sulfur emissions that contribute to acid rain.

The use of biomass fuels produced in America helps strengthen American energy independence, resilience and security.



Biomass fuels can be conveniently delivered in bulk

Why is the BTU Act important?



The BTU Act adds high efficiency biomass thermal technologies to the list of renewable energy technologies that currently benefit from investment tax credits under section 25D (residential) and Section 48 (business) of the tax code.

This investment credit currently applies to biomass thermal (residential), solar thermal and geothermal technologies, but not to biomass thermal (business). The BTU Act corrects this oversight. The BTU Act only qualifies the most efficient and advanced technologies for the credit.

Investment credits are needed for advanced biomass thermal technologies because of their comparatively high up front capital cost. This "capital hurdle" must be overcome to build the market and gain economies of scale that will bring system costs down. Furthermore, through the BTU Act, biomass heating systems (business) will benefit from accelerated depreciation, improving the economics of the projects.

Similar policy has been very effective in reducing the cost of solar (PV and thermal) and geothermal technologies.

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Legislative Summary

The BTU Act of 2021 seeks to recognize and promote the many economic and environmental benefits that biomass thermal energy provides by extending the biomass thermal (residential - 25d) and opening the door to Section 48 of the Internal Revenue Code to incentivize biomass thermal (business). Currently, a host of renewable energy technologies qualify for investment tax credits for capital costs incurred in residential and commercial installations. Simply, this legislation seeks to achieve parity between biomass thermal and other renewable systems.

Section 1

The title underscores that heat from biomass is an underutilized energy source in this country. Converting biomass—in the form of agricultural crop waste, wood chips, pellets or sawmill residuals— into thermal energy is one of the most efficient uses of this resource. Biomass heating systems now entering the marketplace operate at efficiency levels of 75 percent or higher.

Section 2, Business Tax Credit

This provision adds biomass fuel property to the list of existing technologies that qualify for the business renewable energy investment tax credit in Section 48 of the Internal Revenue Code. To qualify, the biomass fuel property must operate at a thermal efficiency rate of at least 75 percent lower heating value (LHV) and used for space heating, air conditioning, domestic hot water, industrial process heat, or any combination.

Included in this section is a broad definition of “biomass fuel.” The term applies both to agricultural and woody biomass, wood processing residues, wastes and grasses. Essentially, any plant derived fuel that is available on a recurring and renewable basis is eligible, including densified biomass fuel. This provision would apply to expenses incurred in years following 2021. This modification to the Section 48 tax credit would expire at the end of 2028.

Section 3, Residential Investment Tax Credit Extension

This provision extends the Section 25d investment tax credit for residential open-loop biomass heating property through the end of 2028. Qualifying biomass heating property must operate at thermal output efficiencies of 75 percent (higher heating value) and be used to generate heat, hot water, or steam.

The credit would increase to the full 30 percent investment tax credit under Section 25d. The credit applies the same broad definition of “biomass fuel” as the Section 48 Tax Credit. This provision would apply to expenses incurred in years following its enactment, and the tax credit would expire at the end of 2028.

The extension of the residential investment tax credit in the BTU Act has also been proposed under the House Ways and Means Committee’s Growing Renewable Energy Now Act (GREEN Act).

Who supports the BTU Act?

509 Fabrication Inc
A.M. Logging, LLC
Advanced Cyclone Systems
AFS Energy Systems
Algae Consultant
Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group
Alliance for Green Heat
American Forest Foundation
American Loggers Council
American Wood Fiber
Appalachian Wood Pellets Inc,
APEX - Area Partnership for Economic Expansion
Aries Clean Technologies
Aroostook Partnership
Backyard Bread
Baling Twine Farm
Bid Group Technologies, Inc
Biomass Briquette Systems
Biomass Energy Resource Center
Biomass Engineering and Equipment
Biomass Magazine
Biomass Power Association
Biomass System Supply
Biomass Thermal Energy Council
Boreal Heat
C&D Recycling Association
Caluwe
Central Boiler
Central New York Weatherization Services
Clean Energy Economy MN
Clean Energy NH
CleanFiber
Connecticut Mulch Distributors, Inc
Curran Renewable Energy, LLC
Cutting Edge Energy Systems
Empire State Forest Products Association
Energy Initiatives, Inc.
Etkind Consulting LLC
Fiber By-Products, Corp.
Field Controls, LLC
Firespeaking, LLC
Forest Energy Corporation
Forest Resources Association
friends of the sun
Froling Energy
FutureMetrics
George F Doughty P and H Inc.
Gogebic Community College
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
Hancock Lumber
Hardwood Federation
Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association
Heating the Midwest
Hedge
Home Energy Raters LLC
Iberia Energetica
Idaho Forest Owners Association
IHB Technologies, Inc
Innovative Natural Resource Solutions
Integrated Energy Systems, PLLC
Kerr Wood Leidal Associates
Lamppa Manufacturing
Lignetics, Inc.
Maine Energy Systems
Maine Pellet Fuels Association
Maine Wood Pellet Co.
Maryland Forests Association
Masonry Heater Association of North America
Massachusetts Clean Energy Center
Massachusetts Forest Alliance
Messersmith Manufacturing
Metzler Forest Products LLC
New England Forestry Foundation
New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association
New Horizon Inc
Northeast Pellets, LLC
Northern Forest Center
Northern NM College
Orion Advocates
Pellet Fuels Institute
Posko Engineering, LLC
Professional Logging Contractors of Maine
Prosody Consulting, LLC
Q-Team Tree Service
Renewable Energy Vermont
Riverdale Farm and Forest
Sandri Energy LLC
Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Solartech Contractors
Solid Rock Masonry Heat
SunWood Biomass
Sustainable Heating Outreach & Education, Inc.
Sustainable Northwest
sustainableheating.org
T&D Wood Energy
Tarm Biomass
Technology Transition Corporation
Travis Industries
Triple Green Products
TTC Energy, LLC
Vermont Energy Investment Corporation
Virginia Loggers Association
Warren & Baerg Mfg., Inc.
Wilson Engineering Services
Wisewood Energy
Wood Energy Recyclers
Wood Management Systems, Inc.
WoodMaster Inc.

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