

**Evaluation of the Renewable Portfolio Standards of 39 States and D.C. in the United States of  
America in Terms of Effectiveness and Intention**

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## Abstract

In the past several decades, there have been several attempts on the part of lawmakers to increase the use of renewable resources in various states via a piece of legislation known as the renewable portfolio standard (RPS), also known as a renewable energy standard, which mandates increased production or consumption of energy from renewable sources. While each state has kept track of whether or not the targets of these pieces of legislation are being reached, there is no consensus on how effective each of these programs are relative to each other, how they compare to states without similar program, or even if any new law was needed at all, in the case of states that met goals before the legislation was even written.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of each program, in terms of how much the share of renewable energy generation and consumption changed in each state while the policy was active, as well as how this period compared to conditions prior to the implementation of the law .In addition, this study will also attempt to determine how the various traits of each RPS affect each program, in order to determine whether a certain set of traits is more favorable to achieve the goal of increased renewable energy usage and consumption within a state. In order to accomplish this, we will create a set of metrics used to evaluate each state, as well as render down each program to a set of clearly defined characteristics that be used to easily compare one program to another. Finally, we want to compare the performance of states with RPS programs to a control group of states with no such program, in order to see how they differentiate in terms of performance.

What we found in the course of the study is that the vast majority of legislation did not lead to an increase in the production or consumption of energy from renewable sources. While a few states did see a corresponding increase in either regard, there was not one particular characteristic or metric that we looked at that was common amongst the different pieces of legislation or states at hand.

## Background

As shown in Fig.1, there are four primary energy sources in the United States coal, natural gas, nuclear and finally renewables. There are of course divisions within each source, most notably for the purposes of this study renewable, which can include wind energy, photovoltaic (PV) and solar energy, hydroelectric, wave and tidal sources, geothermal and biomass sources. Over the past decade the share of renewable as a source of energy in the United States has slowly increased, but not at the rate that many lawmakers believe is necessary. The basis of this necessity varies, ranging from

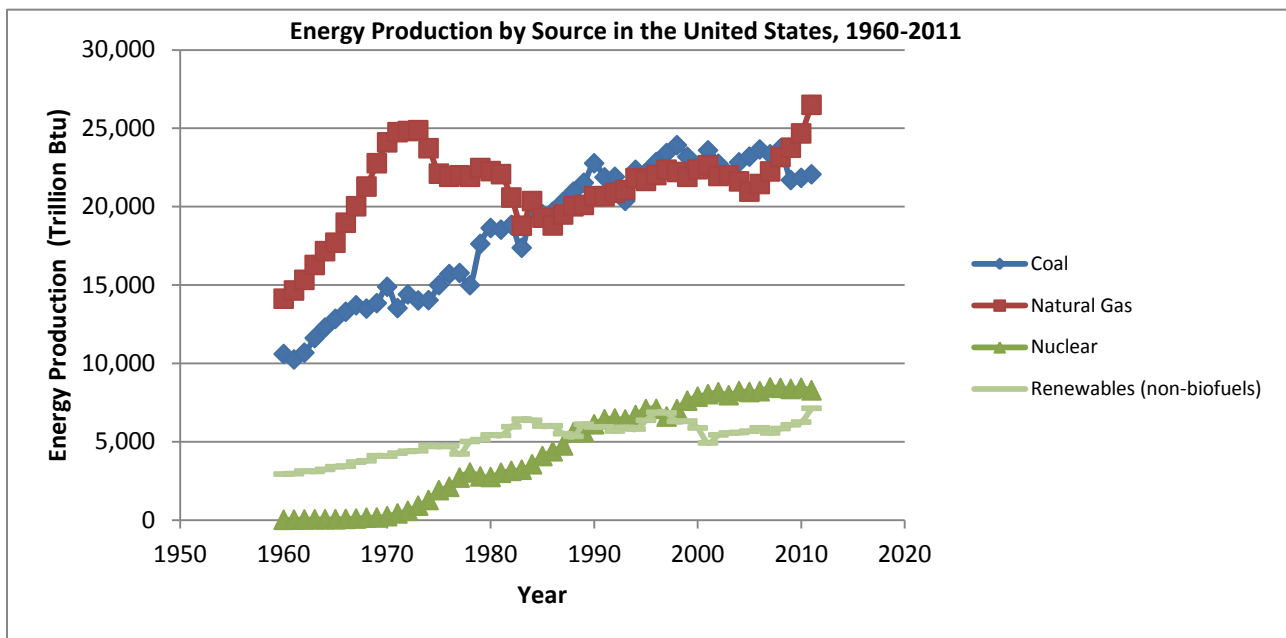
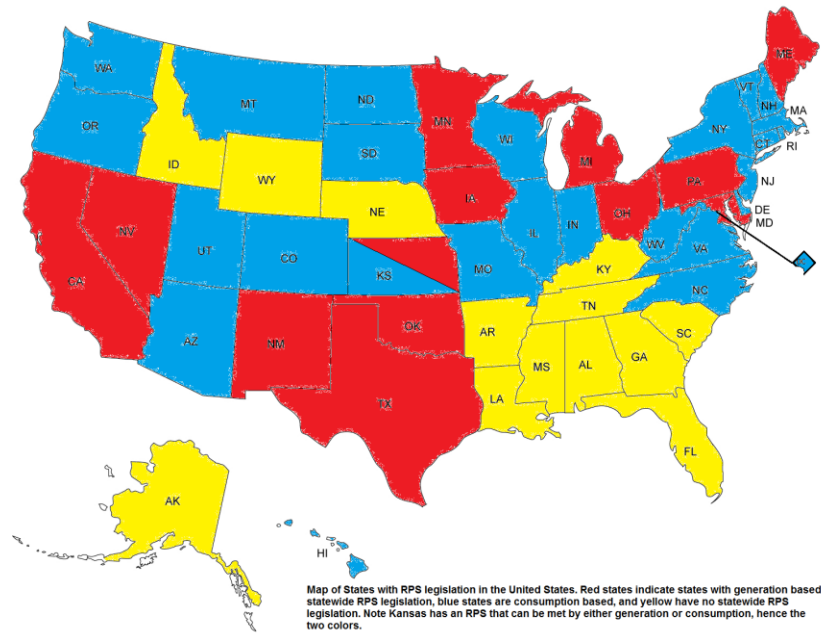


Figure 1. Energy Production by Source in the United States, 1960-2011. Source data is from the Energy Information Agency.

energy security in the U.S. to reducing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, but the overall result of this perceived need was a call for increased production and consumption of energy from renewable sources. In 1983, Iowa passed the Alternative Energy Law (AEL) and became the first state to set a goal for renewable energy consumption (Iowa Code §476.41 et seq.), what we now call a RPS, though it was quickly followed by many other states. Currently, 39 states and the District of Columbia have this type of legislation in one form or another (DSIRE).



Each piece of legislation looks to address certain aspects within the state, primarily in terms of either increasing the total amount of renewables consumed or produced, as well as increasing the overall share of renewables as a percentage. In addition, many of the pieces of legislation apply the RPS varying levels, such as only making compliance required for investor owned utilities (IOUs), or utilities serving over 400,000 customers.

Thus, evaluating these policies once they are in place is primarily done through compliance studies done by the energy agencies within the states, in order to apply the appropriate compliance measure to responsible parties. With the rise of public accessibility to energy data, as well as the growing popularity of the RPS, studies began to be done by economists and public policy academics in order to evaluate the RPS paradigm beyond just compliance, stretching into areas such as the effect of RPSs on retail energy pricing, overall energy production, and how much the RPS really increased renewable energy production within a state. However, at the same time the rising popularity of renewable energy was met with considerable political resistance in the form of lobbying by non-renewable energy corporations, such as the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, which in turn has led to a rise in the scrutiny of these programs. How these programs are scrutinized varies, though a

large portion of research currently focuses on how retail energy pricing and job creation are affected within the state.

The reasoning for studying these pieces of legislation and their effects is quite clear, as each program has the potential for enormous impacts on consumers of retail energy as well as the economy of the region where an RPS is implemented. On a global scale, as the largest consumer of energy on earth, what the United States chooses to use for energy sources can have enormous impacts on the global economy as well as the very environment itself, either through mining or climate change.

## **Review of Previous Work**

A large body of previous work has focused on the economic impact of RPS legislation in the various states it is implemented in (Yin and Powers). Aside from these, studies that have focused on how the impact of RPSs on energy production within the state are quite few and recent, with diverse results ranging from saying the legislation is very effective to having almost no effect. This can be partially attributed to the differences in methodology, such as what metrics various researchers create to try and evaluate energy data. Another reason for why the results may be mixed stems from which states are included in each study. Since most RPSs are recent, researchers vary on which states they decide to include in evaluations as the sample of data from more recent states may be quite small.

Similar work to what is being proposed by this study has been done by the team of Haitao Yin and Thomas Lyon (Yin and Lyon), who looked at both the reasons why states adopt RPSs as well as the effects on energy generation within states that have RPSs. However, their approach, while providing in-depth focus on the market economics of renewable energy production, they focus on a relatively small sample of states relative to what actually exists in the United States, choosing the 16 states that have generation based mandatory based RPSs rather than all states with any type of RPS (Binz), (Bryce), (Wiser and Barbose). While their logic for choosing these states makes sense, as they in theory should

be the most ambitious programs, this still means that their programs do not constitute a representative sample of the RPS in general.

## Methods and Concept

At the heart of this study is the attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of each program and the intention, or level of sincerity, behind those who wrote the program. In order to quantify and examine these attributes we must first create new metrics from the data at hand.

The first metric we developed addressed the issue of evaluating the RPSs in terms of ambition. The metric was created on the simple basis that in order for an RPS to succeed, energy production or consumption of the state in terms of renewable must also increase, though the difference between the starting conditions and final goal varies greatly state to state. Thus, we created a metric based on the annual percent change in renewable energy, as defined by Eq. 1, in order to determine which states had more progress needed in order to hit goal, i.e. which goals were more ambitious.

$$\frac{Goal - Measure_{-1}}{Years_{Allotted}} = \text{Minimum Annual Percent Change Necessary}$$

**Equation 1. Minimum Annual Percent Change Necessary Metric.** “Goal” is defined as the goal of the RPS in relative units, “Measure<sub>-1</sub>” is defined as the measure of the relevant units one year prior to when the RPS takes effect, and “Years<sub>Allotted</sub>” is defined as the number of year between the start of the RPS and its goal year.

As for determining effectiveness, the rate at which states progress towards hitting goal serves as a good measure to evaluate. We should also be able to track actual progress on an annual basis, defined in Eq.2,

$$\frac{Measure_{Latest} - Measure_{-1}}{Years_{Effect}} = \text{Actual Annual Percent Change Metric}$$

**Equation 2. Actual Percent Change Metric.** “Measure<sub>Latest</sub>” is defined as the measure of the relevant unit as of the latest available data, hereafter defined as 2011. “Measure<sub>-1</sub>” is defined as the measure of the relevant units one year prior to when the RPS takes effect, and “Years<sub>Effect</sub>” is defined as the number of years the policy has been in effect, i.e. between implementation year and 2011.

and compare it to the ideal metric from Eq. 1 in order to see how progress towards RPS goals compares.

If a state is seen as greatly outperform its metric from Eq.1, we can infer from this that the goal was not

particularly ambitious, and thus not very sincere, and likewise if progress is much lower than the minimum required then the program was not particularly effective.

Other measures in this study serve to identify external factors such as the economic climate of the state, population change, or overall change in energy production and consumption, as well as specific characteristics of the programs such as whether or not they were mandatory or if the program was specific to production or consumption. The full list of measures used for comparison are listed in the appendix, under Appendix. 1. Data for the measures comes from the United States Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA). All economic data was adjusted for inflation into 2014 United States Dollars (USD).

With the metrics in mind, we then needed to acquire energy data for all 50 states in addition to the District of Columbia. Due to the varied nature of energy production and consumption in the United States, *vis a vis* the many different classifications of companies and municipal organizations that produce and provide energy, we opted to use publically available data from the EIA in order to keep the source data consistent. This data was originally acquired with energy broken down by source, in units of trillion BTU. In order to define the energy used for non-transportation purposes, the primary focus of this study, we first excluded all petroleum and biofuel products, as they are transportation specific and are not used in residential energy generation. This left us with coal, natural gas, nuclear energy, biomass, geothermal, hydroelectric, solar, wind and all other non-biofuel renewables. From these we grouped sources into the categories of renewables (non-biofuel renewable, wind, solar, geothermal and biomass) and non-renewables (coal, natural gas and nuclear energy), and converted the units from Btus to percentages relative to total energy minus energy used for transportation.

We then graphed each state's energy data from 1960 to 2011, the latest year of available data, and compared states based on similar placement in rankings within each of the eight metrics. We created



groupings based on whether people fell above or below the median or in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quartile in a variety of metrics, listed in Appendix 1. In addition, for the RPS only states we did this using data that normalized the start year of the RPS as year 0, and looked back 10 years in addition to all data since enactment in order to see whether or not there was any evidence the RPS had an effect. In theory, enactment should lead to a increase in the relative percentage of renewable energy within a state as the state attempts to meet goal. We grouped these normalized sets based on not only their placements above the median, below the median, in the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile or 4<sup>th</sup> percentile, but also based on how long the RPS had been in effect, i.e. <5 years, 5-6 years, 7-8 years and >9 years. This was done in order to see whether or not a trend develops over time, and each grouping was built to have a consistent sample size of about 10 states or the District.

Finally, we also averaged all renewable and non-renewable values for both percentage and consumption values, as well as averaging all normalized renewable values, in order to identify overall trends in each group. We had expected to see increases in production and consumption as a percentage of overall energy for all RPS states, with lesser positive slopes for non-RPS states or even no slope or negative slopes. A period spanning from 1990 until 2011 was chosen because this covers a majority of the years of enactment for the RPS states, as well as serving as a fairly large time period for attempting to find any trends that may exist.

## **Results and Discussion**

We found a few interesting trends that we did not expect. The first conclusion we were able to draw was that the introduction of the RPS in a state did not universally lead to an increase in either production or consumption, as expected in order to meet the goal conditions. As shown in Appendices 6 and 7, very few states saw an increase in either production or consumption following the enactment of an RPS. This can be due to a variety of reasons, but the most likely can be found by looking at the “Min.

Annual % Change Needed To Hit RPS” metric and comparing how percent change in non-biofuel renewable production compared to percent change in total energy production, as listed in Appendix 1. Any state with a negative or negligible “Min. Annual % Change Needed To Hit RPS” metric has no real incentive to develop renewable sources or increase consumption of energy from renewable sources as they have already met or surpassed their goals.

Another conclusion we found was that when we compared RPS states to non-RPS states, both sets had similar trends in increasing renewable production while oddly having inverse trends for consumption counter to what one may logically expect. We found that when we averaged the most recent ten years of available data, as shown in Appendix 8, production did increase for both groups though slightly more for RPS states, while in terms of consumption RPS states have actually seen a decline in renewable energy consumption as a relative percentage of their consumption portfolio. This is further confirmed when we look at the normalized data for RPS states as shown in Appendix 9, which shows a decline in renewable energy consumption the longer a program is left in place. This is completely counter to what might be expected, and there is no clear reason for why this might be. 12 of the 38 RPS states have negative “Min. Annual % Change Needed To Hit RPS” metrics, which could explain a part of this anomaly, along with a recent boom in the production of natural gas as shown in Fig. 1. It is also quite possible that some RPS states have opted to sell energy produced from renewable sources to non-RPS states, which may not have legislation mandating renewable energy usage but often have financial incentives in place for using renewable energy.

In regards to influence of the other measures outside of the minimum and actual annual percent change metrics, we did not find any consistent trends shared between states in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quartile sets, including even type of RPS (production or consumption based) or between RPS and non-RPS states. This would seem to suggest that the decline in hydroelectric capacity has had little effect on the

renewable production or consumption, as well as changing economic conditions such as tax revenue or population.

It is important to keep in mind that we are working with small samples of data. There are only 39 statewide programs available for analysis for this investigation, and EIA data is the only database that we were able to find that has data on all the states. In future investigations, data may be compiled from multiple sources,, but the issue still remains that it does not take many states with anomalous data in order to skew each groups data. For example, Rhode Island, Delaware, and Hawaii produced almost the entirety of their energy from renewable sources, as shown in Appendix2. A way for future studies create a more representative of energy trends would be to look at gross production and consumption rather than percentages, in order to minimize the impact of smaller states whose energy portfolios may not be indicative of the majority of U.S. states or of overall energy production or consumption.

Measurement error in the data in negligible, as the uncertainty in the EIA data is in the thousands of Btus while the units we looked at were many factors larger in the trillions of Btus.

## **Conclusions**

While the theory behind the RPS is sound, there is no clear evidence that the presence of an RPS program within a state actually promotes renewable energy consumption or production. While on the whole RPS states do produce more energy from renewable as a percentage of their portfolio than their non-RPS counterparts, the growth rates for both groups are about equal in the 20 year period we looked at.

The type of program did not seem to matter either – neither production nor consumption based RPS program was superior in increasing production or consumption rates. The same was true for whether or not the program was mandatory or voluntary, though this is a bit more tricky to generalize as

the nature of a state's RPS can change over time, as Iowas AEL did when it became mandatory in 2007 (Iowa Utilities Board).

As for the other factors that may influence energy in a state, we were not able to find any factor that appeared to encourage renewable energy production. We did find that in the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile groupings for the metrics of federal spending to revenue, average percent change in hydroelectric consumption per year and average percent change in income per year. The hydroelectric related decrease makes sense – in states that got a majority of their renewable energy from dams, the closure of these dams would lead to the decrease seen. As for the other two factors, this is more difficult to discern why the decrease would occur, especially as the state that had the lowest average percent change in state tax revenue per year actually saw renewable increase as a percent of their states energy portfolio. Future research will need to investigate why this may be, as there is no logical reason why an economic factor may be correlated while another very similar factor – i.e., federal spending to revenue ration and state tax revenue – would not be correlated also.

In conclusion, legislation to encourage development of renewable energy sources has not been universally successful in the goals set by the legislation. While some states do see an increase in the desired area, others do not, and there is no consistency in either group or the factors that may determine the legislations success. This would seem to indicate that on the whole, the RPS is not an effective legislative tool in promoting renewable energy production or consumption even while managing to hit the goals of the RPS. Even more unfortunate for the goals of these programs, renewable energy has not gained any ground when seen as a percentage of either overall production or consumption for the United States, as shown by Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

When considering future legislation, such as more states developing their own RPS programs or even a national RPS, lawmakers may want to consider alternative forms of legislation, such as additional

federal tax credits for developing new renewable energy generation stations or even the creation of a government sponsored enterprise with the purpose of offsetting startup losses and providing construction and implementation expertise of renewable power generators such as wind turbines or solar panels, as has been done in countries like China.

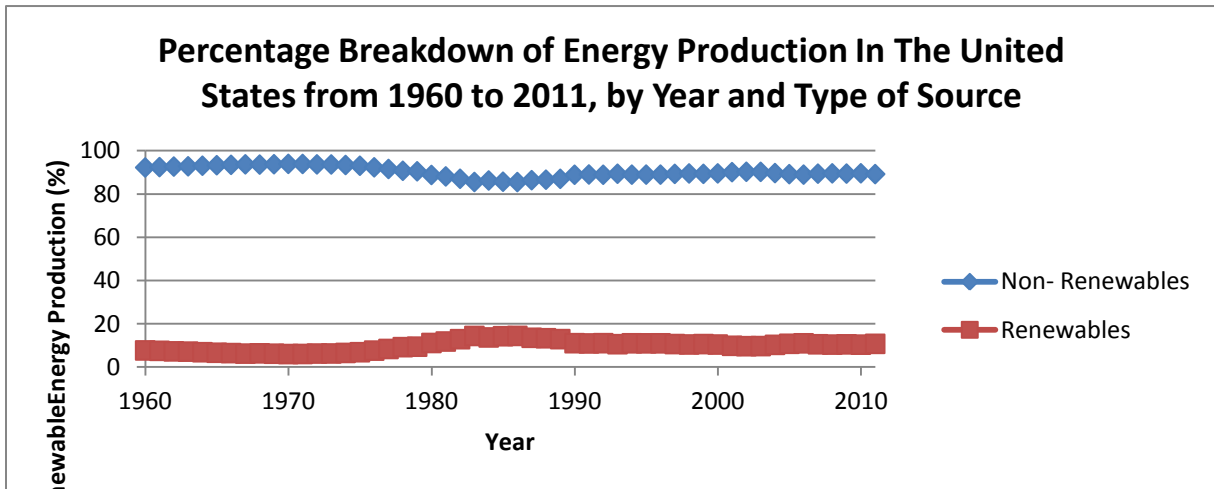


Figure 2. Percentage Breakdown of Energy Production In The United States from 1960 to 2011, by Year and Type of Source. Derived from E.I.A. data on total domestic energy production excluding biofuels and petroleum.

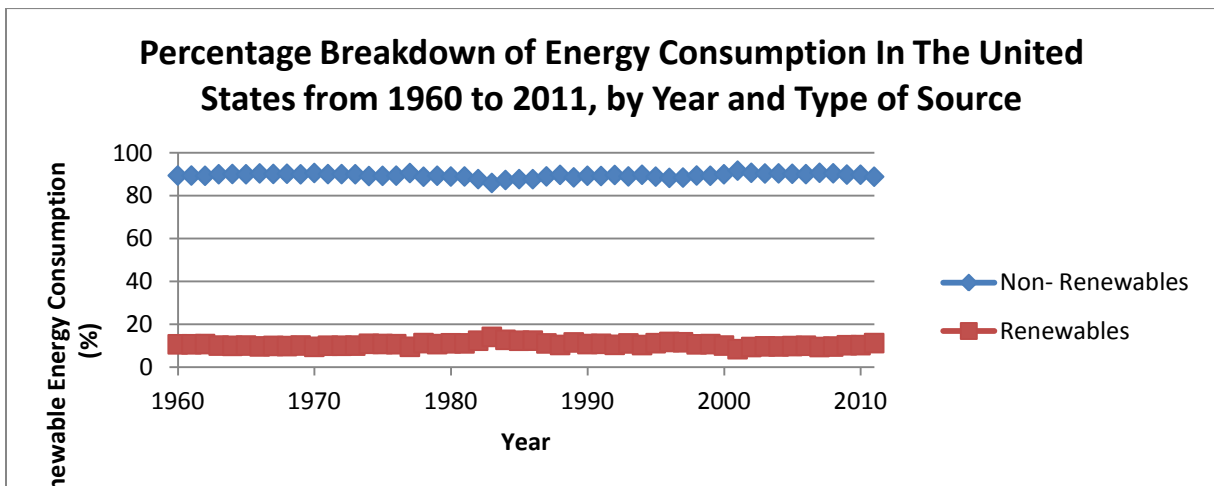


Figure 3. Percentage Breakdown of Energy Consumption In The United States from 1960 to 2011, by Year and Type of Source. Derived from E.I.A. data on total domestic energy consumption, excluding biofuels and petroleum.

## **Future Investigations**

There is still a lot of room for improvement for future studies. This study looked at the current conditions for each RPS, though the subject to change and updates as an RPS progresses, as had happened with Iowas AEL. Furthermore, this study did not do a full economic analysis of the impact of the various economic factors, counter to what was the focus on many previous studies. An attempt to do so here may provide more clues as to how the various economic conditions affected the RPS, and provide more insight into the results we obtained. Another area for improvement is the exact groups within a state subject to the RPS. Each RPS has different levels of application to different utilities, energy cooperatives, etc. In this study the application rates were averaged, though future studies could more finally tune this so that exact application levels within each energy market can be grouped, allowing for higher accuracy for goal settings. Finally, future studies could focus on different levels of resolution beyond the statewide RPS – many municipalities and some power companies set their own RPS that goes beyond the statewide goals, though these were not considered in this study.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the DSIRE team for helping to make information on RPS legislation more accessible, which greatly helped in this projects' initial stages. I would also like to thank Professor Justin Gallagher, whose guidance this project was essential in determining how to characterize RPS legislation and how to evaluate their effectiveness. I would also like to thank Dr. Kenneth Singer, for his patience and instruction throughout the senior project experience.

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## Appendix 1. Table of Metrics for all 50 States and the District of Columbia

States	Min. Annual % Change Needed to Hit RPS Metric	Actual Annual % Change Towards Goal Level Metric	Average % change in non-biofuel renewable production per year metric	Average % change in total energy production levels per year metric	Average % change in state tax revenue per year metric	Average % change in population per year metric	Average % change in income per capita per year	Average % change in hydroelectric consumption per year	Federal Spending to Revenue Ratio Metric
Arizona	0.253125	-0.1348	10.76498	8.202398	10.4506	11.10386	9.877652	#DIV/0!	1.392727
California	-0.92841	0.388152	12.16521	8.297885	9.384489	9.931667	9.689292	#DIV/0!	0.848182
Colorado	1.705565	0.009256	32.40364	14.38083	8.912848	10.5295	9.383319	#DIV/0!	0.696364
Connecticut	0.194805	-0.54624	9.102185	9.357195	9.746995	9.503999	9.549836	#DIV/0!	0.721818
Delaware	1.109903	0.266808	25.91803	25.91803	11.03264	10.35801	9.133587	#DIV/0!	0.447273

District of Columbia (Not a state)	0.967019	-0.43228	0.925926	0.925926	41.5819	9.82499	12.9704	#DIV/0!	1.216364
Hawaii	-0.76468	0.622542	13.95607	13.95607	9.86493	10.20769	10.57468	9.090909	1.859091
Illinois	1.21237	0.243513	21.04984	10.48236	9.502108	9.372731	9.521549	#DIV/0!	0.586364
Indiana	0.438396	#DIV/0!	16.26227	11.04041	10.6057	9.688833	9.114908	#DIV/0!	1.036364
Iowa	-2.5E+15	-1.8E+14	30.61194	43.86932	10.11537	9.523595	10.54798	#DIV/0!	1.155455
Kansas	1.42297	2.360551	43.98391	8.164934	9.709696	9.686694	10.09506	#DIV/0!	0.894545
Kansas	1.610446	0.076966	43.98391	8.164934	9.709696	9.686694	10.09506	#DIV/0!	0.894545
Maine	-3.6	0	9.596855	9.596855	9.810844	9.384253	10.12235	6.841612	1.695455
Maryland	0.175376	0.565939	15.55262	8.643892	10.62454	9.857285	10.33215	7.781142	1.18
Massachusetts	0.195158	-0.33901	9.056244	9.029237	9.14257	9.387653	9.817456	9.090909	0.782727
Michigan	-0.70757	0.994369	10.29459	8.68098	7.621956	8.986604	8.736466	9.090909	0.96
Minnesota	-0.65799	4.172927	18.00412	16.79088	9.975231	9.772078	9.613601	5.263158	0.427273
Missouri	0.466325	0.628152	17.11742	14.12325	8.153948	9.706121	9.652753	#DIV/0!	0.97
Montana	0.400727	-0.72783	15.82298	10.40597	10.97	10.0334	10.87204	#DIV/0!	1.670909
Nevada	-3.03571	0	10.76129	10.45688	11.77037	11.75527	9.095373	#DIV/0!	0.886364
New Hampshire	0.270767	2.705017	12.80551	9.772243	9.133917	9.516965	9.554235	0	0.897273
New Jersey	0.685633	0.179572	11.03279	10.12933	10.05727	9.451703	9.83753	#DIV/0!	0.658182
New Mexico	1.4533	0.163103	45.02151	7.394271	8.773145	10.34871	10.63676	#DIV/0!	2.477273
New York	2.286842	-0.01449	9.565955	9.894972	10.78965	9.307917	9.996279	10.38961	0.692727
North Carolina	-1.15719	-0.39008	10.33582	9.910197	10.22886	10.7235	9.36299	0.119617	1.012727
North Dakota	1.01733	0.032951	41.18315	20.56517	18.11065	9.799958	12.58117	#DIV/0!	2.011818
Ohio	0.366981	-0.04905	10.52412	10.19096	9.084334	9.227918	9.342143	#DIV/0!	0.662727
Oklahoma	2.287566	0.634972	17.96128	10.78286	8.734804	9.961644	10.59159	#DIV/0!	0.88
Oregon	0.224652	0.770425	13.19532	13.33461	9.691487	10.13535	9.58792	#DIV/0!	1.048182
Pennsylvania	0.814833	-0.07188	13.22963	11.91546	10.21007	9.428095	9.849964	#DIV/0!	0.916364
Rhode Island	0.65	-0.26694	7.873502	7.873502	8.603203	9.025508	10.37153	#DIV/0!	0.863636
South Dakota	0.82495	0.228829	22.64119	45.56285	10.05736	9.901737	11.11106	#DIV/0!	1.387273
Texas	7.66E+15	2.44E+16	36.49949	12.00577	10.44593	10.94518	9.868083	#DIV/0!	1.045455
Utah	1.074999	-0.18552	20.54572	9.71013	9.648795	11.28348	9.954598	#DIV/0!	0.88



Vermont	-0.67493	4.633044	15.9779	12.21496	12.33135	9.28873	10.42139	9.090909	1.250909
Virginia	-0.4727	-1.00845	10.04854	7.607397	9.481142	10.24043	10.08633	#DIV/0!	1.528182
Washington	-0.76317	0.401479	14.50974	12.255	9.781767	10.36933	9.852526	0	0.838182
West Virginia	1.018338	1.623933	27.67891	8.021281	10.84465	9.360561	10.4335	10.90909	2.35
Wisconsin	-0.49327	-0.06001	9.44762	11.94663	9.289947	9.612377	9.752612	8.522727	0.891818
Alabama	NA	NA	8.865995	8.580174	9.112682	9.779971	10.03816	#DIV/0!	1.966364
Alaska	NA	NA	8.397871	5.673833	27.61081	10.34847	10.48373	#DIV/0!	1.568182
Arkansas	NA	NA	10.9744	27.29356	11.36046	9.921251	10.5867	#DIV/0!	0.742727
Florida	NA	NA	15.15659	9.104631	9.036257	10.56629	9.735931	#DIV/0!	2.688182
Georgia	NA	NA	9.093749	9.100655	7.933931	10.6429	8.950889	6.060606	0.868182
Idaho	NA	NA	15.06152	15.6127	9.082838	10.90756	9.642049	#DIV/0!	1.283636
Kentucky	NA	NA	10.90817	7.411186	9.253819	9.77023	9.622677	#DIV/0!	1.492727
Louisiana	NA	NA	7.31715	13.0306	8.774386	9.313642	11.20071	#DIV/0!	2.678182
Mississippi	NA	NA	8.974043	9.633732	9.823637	9.474145	10.53816	#DIV/0!	2.869091
Nebraska	NA	NA	16.10715	20.09943	9.723136	9.777574	10.25488	#DIV/0!	0.662727
South Carolina	NA	NA	13.91936	10.17109	8.556692	10.46969	11.9049	#DIV/0!	2.931818
Tennessee	NA	NA	9.861636	8.691427	10.0936	10.14148	9.642873	0	0.992727
Wyoming	NA	NA	36.82732	11.34087	14.39343	10.44667	11.45456	#DIV/0!	0.857273

Note: States are color coded according to type of RPS legislation. Red indicates production based RPS, blue indicates consumption based RPS, and yellow indicates states without statewide RPS programs in place. Note how Kansas has an RPS whose goal can be met by either production and consumption, and hence both cases extremes are listed.

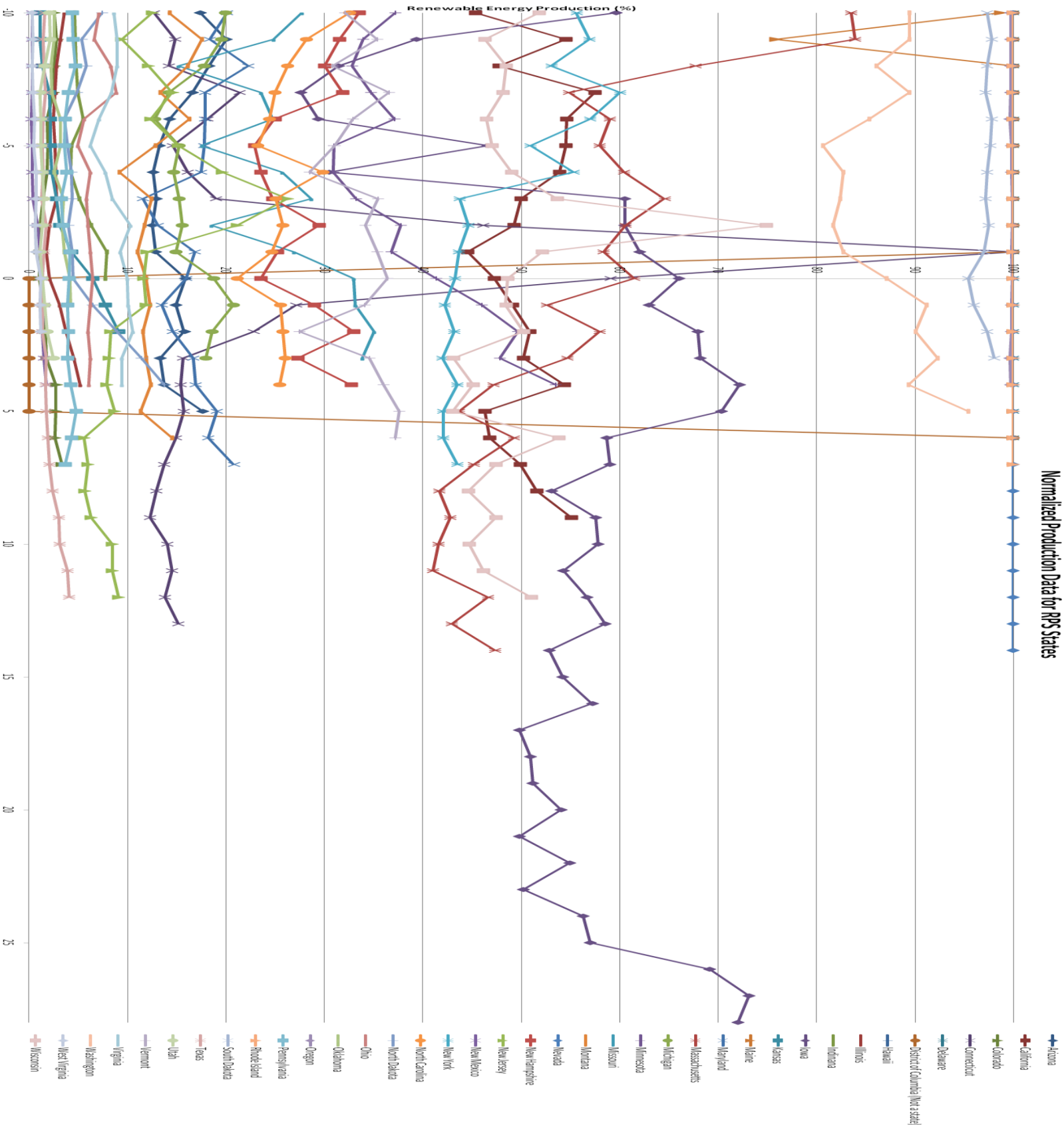




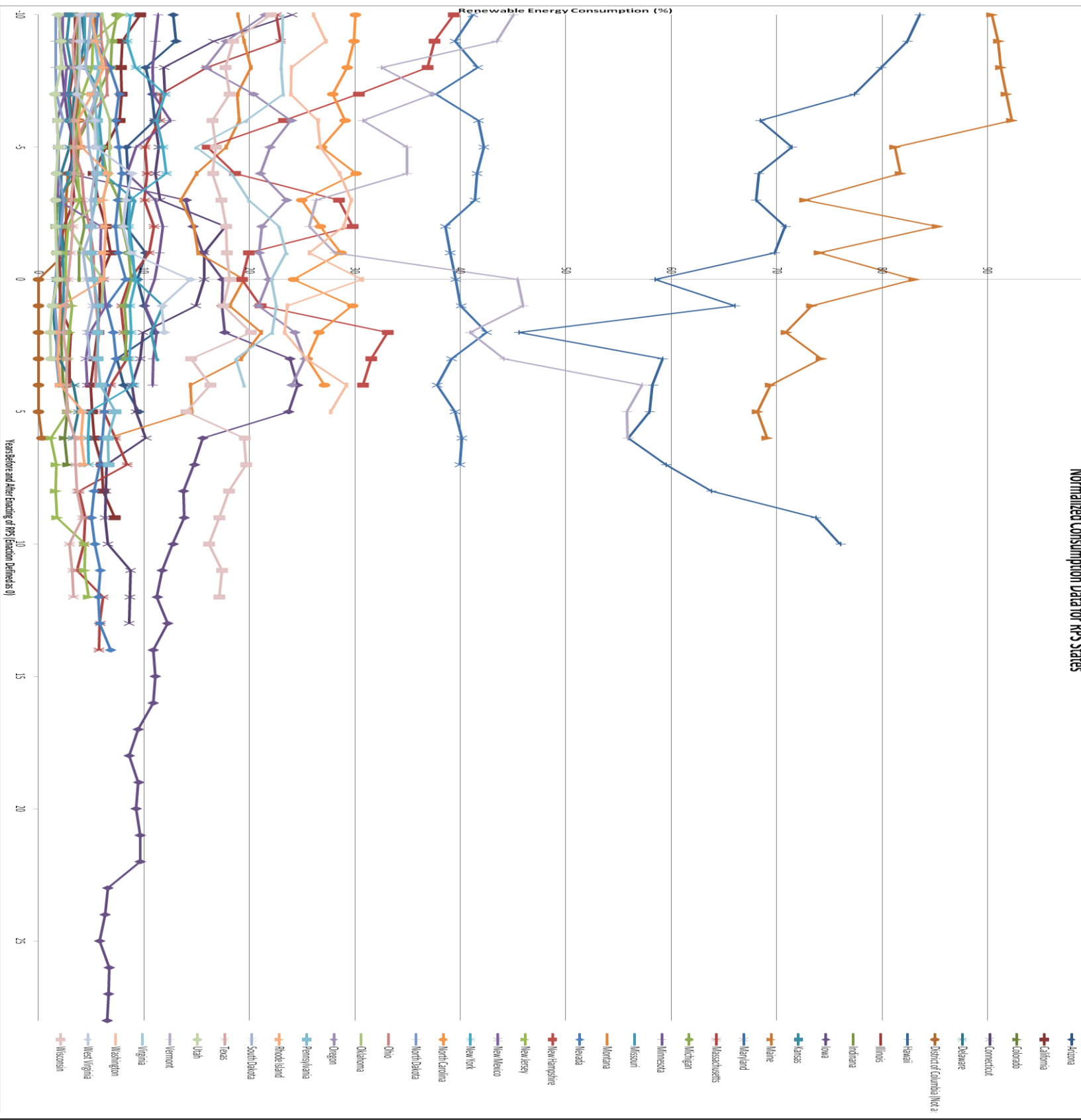




# Appendix 6. Normalized Production Data for RPS States, Graphed

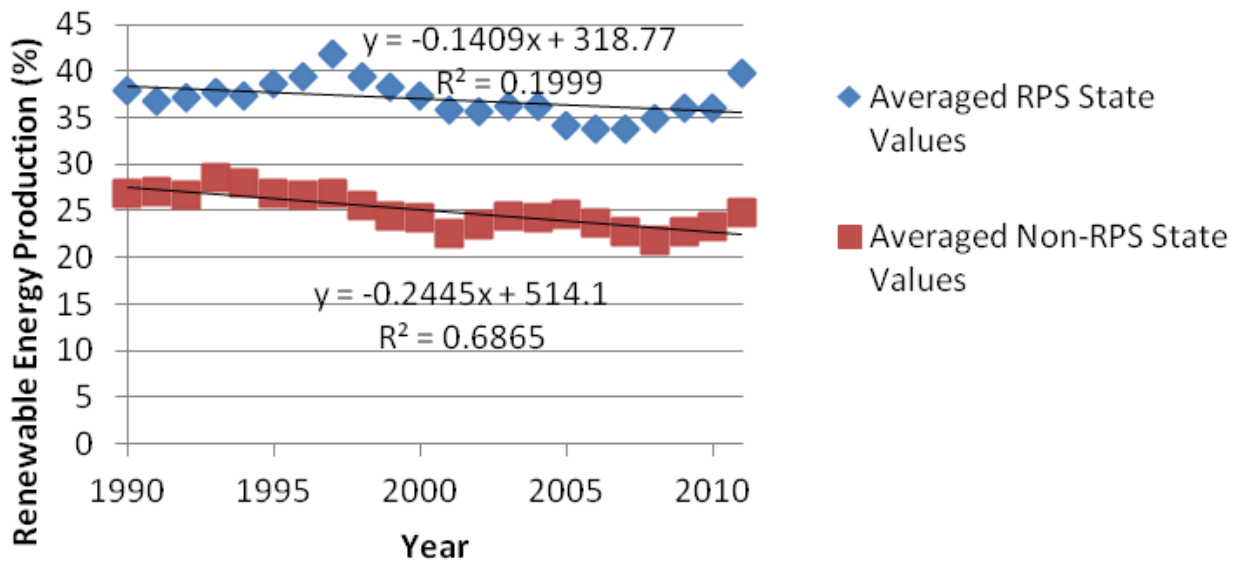


# Appendix 7. Normalized Consumption Data for RPS States, Graphed

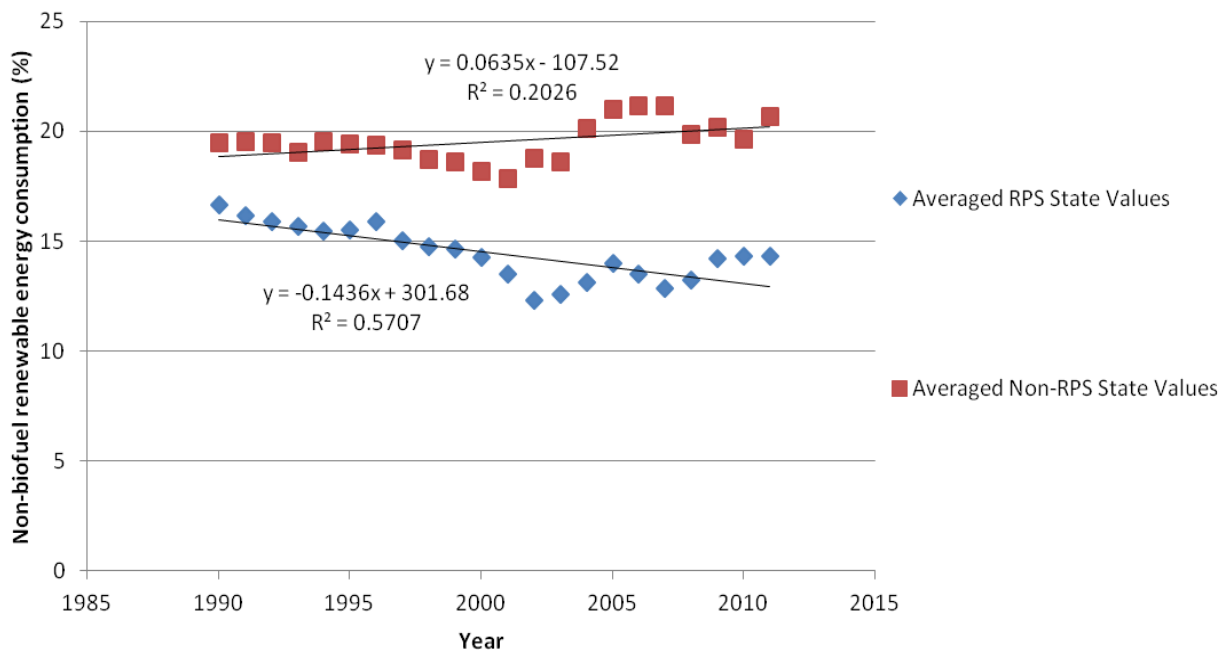


**Appendix 8. Averaged Renewable Energy Production and Consumption Values as a Percentage by Year for RPS States vs. Non-RPS States**

**Non-biofuel renewable energy production averaged for RPS and non-RPS States, 1990-2011**



**Non-biofuel renewable energy consumption averaged for RPS and non-RPS States, 1990-2011**





## Appendix 9. Normalized and Averaged Values for Production and Consumption in RPS States.

