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NEWS RELEASE

New National Model Energy Code Will Boost the Energy Efficiency of Home and Commercial Building Construction by Historic 30% Levels

Energy Consuming Public the Beneficiary as Governmental Officials Substantially Improve International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)

CHARLOTTE, NC, November 1, 2010 – The efficiency of the next edition of America’s model energy code governing home and commercial building construction, additions and renovations will most likely *achieve* the 30% boost sought by the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of State Energy Officials, governors, lawmakers and the broad-based Energy Efficient Codes Coalition (EECC). After two decades of modest efficiency gains, it’s clear by their overwhelming votes that building officials across the U.S. recognize that we can lock in significant energy savings for generations to come by making efficiency improvements at construction or renovation, when they’re cheapest and easiest.

“It is notable that the votes that will have the most profound impact on national energy and environmental policy this year were *not* held in Washington or a state capital, but by governmental officials assembled by the International Code Council (ICC) in Charlotte, NC,” said EECC Executive Director William Fay. “Reducing wasted energy from the nation’s largest single user – our homes and commercial buildings, which consume nearly half of our energy – was the byword of the nearly 500 state and local government representatives who spent five days of rigorous hearings to evaluate and pass judgment on hundreds of proposals to improve (or weaken) the IECC’s residential and commercial chapters. The ICC is to be congratulated for the tremendous efforts of its members to finish this code and achieve substantial energy efficiency.”

An Integrated, “Whole Building” Approach to Improving Efficiency in Homes and Commercial Building Construction

Comprehensive proposals offered by the US Department of Energy, working with many other stakeholders, addressed all aspects of residential and commercial building construction, laying a strong foundation for residential efficiency gains and leading commercial building efficiency improvements. To meet the 30% goal in the residential code, voting delegates added a number of improvements from

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EECC's comprehensive package, "The 30% Solution 2012" and other stakeholder proposals to DOE's foundation. The resulting residential improvements will:

- Ensure that new homes are better sealed to reduce heating and cooling losses,
- Improve the efficiency of windows and skylights,
- Increase insulation in ceilings, walls, and foundations,
- Reduce wasted energy from leaky heating and cooling ducts,
- Improve hot-water distribution systems to reduce wasted energy and water in piping, and
- Boost lighting efficiency.

Commercial Gains Should Match Residential: Officials adopted the joint DOE/New Buildings Institute/American Institute of Architects package for commercial buildings which, along with many of the features cited above, includes continuous air barriers; daylighting controls; increasing the number of climate zones where economizers are required; and a choice of three paths for designers and developers to increase efficiency: using renewable energy or installing more efficient HVAC equipment *or* lighting systems. It also requires the "commissioning" of new buildings, integrally linking efficiency building designs with lifelong building performance by applying a systematic approach to building quality assurance that monitors, identifies and makes corrections when energy savings aren't living up to expectations. A number of additional IECC improvements supported by EECC and other stakeholders were adopted on top of the commercial package.

Rejecting Proposals That Weaken Efficiency

Government voting representatives also rejected several proposals to weaken the IECC. Key among them were proposals to reinstate a provision of the 2009 IECC's that eliminated "tradeoffs," under which builders installed less efficient insulation and windows in exchange for more efficient heating & cooling (HVAC) equipment that would have been installed anyway. "Efficiency shouldn't be an either/or proposition," Fay said. "We need to both improve building envelopes and install high-efficiency HVAC systems. It makes no sense to 'trade away' the long-lasting energy savings from tighter buildings."

The delegates also voted almost unanimously to adopt a proposal offered by Virginia code officials to replace the weaker provisions of the energy chapter of the International Residential Code with a reference requiring that all residential buildings comply with the IECC. As a result, the IECC will be the sole source for energy efficiency provisions for residential and commercial buildings.

While All Americans Will Share the Energy Security and Environmental Benefits of More Efficient Buildings, Home/Building Owners and Occupants Top List of Beneficiaries

By reducing monthly energy bills, efficiency improvements generate positive cash flow that rapidly recoups the cost of these measures (efficiency buildings are also more comfortable for their occupants). Because of long building lives and the higher cost of retrofits, many of the efficiency improvements made today will benefit current and future home and building owners for generations to come.

The efficiency improvements adopted by the ICC incorporate readily available technologies. As one homebuilder testified, a 30 percent boost in new home efficiency is now a modest target, with a growing number of green builders across the nation delivering new homes well beyond that threshold. Because the inability to pay utility bills is the second leading cause of foreclosures and evictions, currently at record highs, low income housing advocates argue that the efficiency improvements will make it more likely that low income families will be able to afford to keep their homes. Finally, a study by U.S. DOE's National Renewable Energy Laboratory found that an average home that's 30 percent more energy-efficient returns \$511 a year in energy savings to homeowners *after taking into account the small mortgage payment increase needed to pay for the efficiency improvements.*

From the national economic perspective, efficient buildings will demonstrably reduce US energy consumption, which will help stabilize energy costs to businesses and manufacturers, defer the need for new power plant construction and, by reducing energy demand, improve national energy security.

"The 'winners' run the gamut from homeowners to businesses operating in areas of the country with high energy costs and insufficient energy supplies to manufacturers to cities trying to reduce their carbon footprint to a nation struggling to reduce energy imports," Fay added.

What's Next

State Adoption & Code Compliance. "The next goal will be for states and localities to adopt the 2012 IECC so that all new homebuyers and commercial buildings owners can begin to benefit from improved efficiency," Fay added. "And because states have committed to show 90% compliance with the IECC by 2017, we want to work to support collaboration at all levels of government to ensure adequate training and other support for the code officials who must meet this ambitious compliance target.

Future Improvements in America's Model Code. "A number of energy saving proposals offered by the EECC and other stakeholders received majority support but not the 2/3 majority needed for adoption," Fay observed. "While this is unfortunate, we know that the governmental officials present in Charlotte used their best judgment to guide their vote on the 2012 code. But because states and local jurisdictions are free to consider these energy saving improvements individually, EECC will work with them, while refining the proposals for inclusion in the ICC's next round of hearings to develop the 2015 IECC."

About EECC

The Energy Efficient Codes Coalition is a unique, broad-based alliance of longstanding energy efficiency advocates – from government, national energy efficiency groups, regional energy efficiency alliances, environmental groups, utilities, affordable housing advocates, architecture, academia/think tanks, energy consumers and businesses, and labor. Together, the coalition authored "The 30% Solution 2012" a comprehensive code change proposal that employs existing, "state-of-the-shelf" technologies to boost energy efficiency in the 2012 residential model energy code by up to 35% over the 2006 IECC baseline efficiency levels. The coalition also opposes proposals that either weaken energy efficiency or include industry- or product-specific special exemptions. The EECC is housed at the Alliance to Save Energy (a founding member). For more information, visit www.thirtypercentsolution.org.

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