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Energy Efficiency Will Help Arizona Manage Growth

By Rep. Lucy Mason

As an Arizona legislator, the underlying issue that I see in every bill every day is growth. Neighborhoods spring up seemingly overnight bringing increased demands on law enforcement, education, social services and transportation. However, the more important need inherently attached to growth is the need for energy.

Questions arise. What energy sources will sustain our phenomenal growth? Do we build more coal-fueled power plants, nuclear power plants? Where? Are there security risks? What are the environmental impacts? Where do we build needed transmission lines?

I suggest that renewable energy generation and energy efficiency answers many growth related energy needs. One problem is that until recently, solar and wind power have been too expensive per kilowatt hour. Another problem is wasted energy through devices and appliances that are inefficient.

However, as world demand increases new U.S. technologies are being developed that reduce energy costs. European countries are buying our technology and energy efficient products. In this country, several states are creating policy to further encourage renewable energy production and efficiency. The results are that many cities and communities around the nation are now beginning to incorporate renewable energy sources into their electrical grids.

As chairman of the House Ad Hoc Committee on Renewable Generation and Energy Efficiency, we have seen that increasing energy efficiency makes good sense for businesses and consumers. That is why I introduced H2390 in the Legislature this year. My bill sets minimum energy efficiency standards on 12 products, mostly commercial products, sold in Arizona. New products that meet energy efficiency standards will save over \$650 million for Arizona consumers and businesses, save about 15 billion gallons water, and save one 290-megawatt power plant from being built.

In the past the federal government has adopted minimum efficiency standards for major consumer products like household refrigerators, air conditioners, clothes washers, and water heaters. These federal standards were signed into law by President Reagan in 1987 and have saved consumers and businesses alike billions of dollars on their energy bills.

H2390 creates similar standards for commercial products not covered by the federal standards such as commercial refrigerators, clothes washers and large air conditioning equipment. These standards apply only to new products – therefore they do not affect existing installed equipment. Because the standards begin to take effect starting in 2008, manufacturers and distributors have adequate time to prepare.

Energy efficiency proponents, businesses, government agencies, and regulatory officials developed this effective state standards bill which passed the Legislature with broad bipartisan support and was signed into law by Governor Napolitano on April 25.

I commend my colleagues and the governor for supporting these practical, cost-effective energy efficiency standards. I also thank the Arizona Corporation Commission, the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET), the Arizona Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), Southwest Gas Company, and Salt River Project, among others, for their active support of the bill.

Together, clean renewable energy and energy efficiency will boost our economy, provide jobs, save water, reduce our reliance on fossil fuel imports, and help protect our natural environment. I call on all Arizona citizens and businesses to join me in increasing our commitment to energy efficiency and clean renewable energy.

Lucy Mason is a Republican who represents District 1 in Prescott. She sponsored several energy efficiency and renewable energy bills in the House this past session. She is also chair of the House Ad Hoc Committee on Renewable Generation and Energy Efficiency.

FYI

A copy of H2390 and SWEET's fact sheet on it are available on the SWEET website at <http://www.swenergy.org/legislative/arizona/index.html>. The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET) is a public interest organization dedicated to advancing energy efficiency in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. To learn more, visit www.swenergy.org.