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Sierra Club Succeeds in Effort to Implement Cost-Saving Building Codes in New Mexico

New Codes Will Save Money, Conserve State's Natural Resources

(SANTA FE, NM) – The Sierra Club today announced that the organization, the oldest and largest grassroots organization in American history, has succeeded in its effort to ensure cost-saving building codes will be published in the New Mexico State Register. The Sierra Club had filed a legal challenge after Governor Susana Martinez declared that she would halt publication of the cost-saving building codes. The new building codes, which the New Mexico Construction Industries Commission adopted in 2010, include increased energy efficiency measures that will lead to smarter energy use and will save New Mexicans money.

“These codes will save New Mexicans money, slow climate change, and conserve the state’s celebrated natural resources,” said Shrayas Jatkar, local organizer with the Sierra Club. “This is a victory for us all.”

Last week, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled on two cases, *New Energy Economy v. Martinez* and *Amigos Bravos v. Martinez*, which raised similar legal challenges to the Governor’s actions attempting to illegally halt several other final rules intended to protect the environment. Because the Supreme Court clearly ruled that the Governor had overstepped her legal authority when she ordered the publication of rules halted, the Sierra Club agreed to drop its lawsuit in exchange for an agreement from the State that it would publish the cost-saving building codes immediately.

“We are very pleased that this issue could be resolved so quickly,” said Gloria D. Smith, a Senior Staff Attorney with the Sierra Club. “The faster the cost-saving codes are published, the faster residents and businesses in New Mexico can begin saving on their energy bills.”

Once implemented, the new building codes will help New Mexico residents and businesses save money on electric and gas bills by reducing their energy consumption by approximately 20 percent. According to the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET), the residential code will result in an average net savings of nearly \$14 per month (\$167 per year) for each homeowner, which adds up to \$66 million dollars saved over a ten year period throughout the state. The new codes will also improve property values for homeowners and lower barriers to homeownership for low-income New Mexicans.

“A transparent, one-year public process resulted in a common-sense, cost-effective Energy Conservation Code that is good for New Mexicans,” said Tammy Fiebelkorn, New Mexico Representative for SWEET. “We are thrilled that efforts to stop implementation of the new code were unsuccessful. New Mexicans deserve the cost savings and pollution reduction that will result from this code.”

Implementation of the codes will also decrease demand for energy from dirty and dangerous fossil fuels like coal and oil. New Mexico currently relies on energy from coal-fired power plants such as the Four Corners Power Plant and San Juan Generating Station in northwestern New Mexico, which threaten local communities with toxic air pollution and worsen climate change.

The new code will stimulate New Mexico’s energy efficiency product development sector and other clean energy sectors, creating new jobs. Furthermore, the new codes would make New Mexico eligible to receive its fair share of \$3.1 billion in funding from the State Energy Program under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“The New Mexico Energy Conservation Code is a common-sense, cost-effective code developed by builders, code officials, product suppliers, efficiency advocates and concerned citizens during a year-long process,” said Michael Casaus, Sierra Club Senior Field Organizing Manager. “The many New Mexicans who worked to develop these cost-saving codes and the many, many New Mexicans who will benefit from the savings share in today’s victory.”

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