



Southwest Energy Efficiency Project
Saving Money and Reducing Pollution through Energy Conservation

PRESS RELEASE

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SWEEP PRAISES NEW LEGISLATION THAT WILL RAISE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN NEW MEXICO

(Santa Fe, NM) -- The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) applauds the adoption and signing into law by Governor Bill Richardson of three bills that will improve the energy efficiency of public buildings and vehicles in New Mexico. The bills include:

- Advanced Energy Technologies Economic Development Act (HB 251), sponsored by Representative Nick Salazar (D-San Juan Pueblo). The bill, and accompanying appropriations, establishes a \$0.5 million grants program to support energy efficiency and renewable energy projects by local governments, community colleges and universities, and tribal entities. The bill also provides \$0.2 million to help develop hydrogen and fuel cell technologies in New Mexico.

- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Capital Projects (HB 293), sponsored by Representative Edward Sandoval (D-Albuquerque). An appropriation of \$2.65 million within the Governor's Capital Outlay Projects Budget will fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in state buildings and public schools facilities.

- No Excise Tax on Fuel-Efficient Vehicles (SB 86), cosponsored by Senators Carlos Cisneros (D-Questa) and Dede Feldman (D-Albuquerque). This bill exempts gas/electric hybrid cars, trucks, and SUVs that exceed 27.5 mpg from the 3% motor vehicle excise tax. The tax exemption will be in effect for five years starting July 1, 2004.

“The direct result of House Bills 251 and 293 will be a savings to taxpayers due to lower energy costs in state buildings, schools, and local government buildings,” said Jill Cliburn, SWEEP’s New Mexico Representative. “But more important, these energy-saving projects will serve as a model for energy-saving efforts in all sectors—from households to small businesses to large factories.”

All three bills offer environmental as well as energy-saving benefits. The excise tax exemption on hybrid vehicles will help improve urban air quality in a state where the demand for heavily polluting light trucks and SUVs is especially high. Hybrid gas-electric vehicles have lower tailpipe emissions as well as higher fuel economy than conventional vehicles. Also, saving electricity in public buildings will reduce pollutant emissions and water consumption by power plants in the state.

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“The three bills are a good start towards stimulating widespread energy efficiency improvements in New Mexico,” commented Howard Geller, SWEEP’s Executive Director. “SWEEP urges Governor Richardson, the legislature, and New Mexico’s utilities to follow-up by establishing well-funded, long-term energy efficiency programs for all citizens and businesses in the state. Doing so would maximize the energy bill savings, pollution reduction, and water savings that come from greater energy efficiency.”

The tax exemption on fuel-efficient vehicles fulfills one of Governor Richardson’s campaign promises, and the Advanced Energy Technologies Development Act implements a Joint Memorial on energy efficiency and renewable energy passed in the legislature last year. SWEEP worked closely with the Governor’s office, the New Mexico State Energy Office, and with the New Mexico Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy to develop and support these bills.

About SWEEP: The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) is a public interest organization dedicated to advancing energy efficiency in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. For more information, visit the SWEEP website at www.swenergy.org.