



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
April 14, 2005

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LEGISLATURE PASSES SECOND ENERGY EFFICIENCY POLICY Governor's Desk is Next Step HB 1133 Will Save Consumers Money on Energy Bills

(Denver, CO) – The Colorado General Assembly today adopted House Bill 1133. Sponsored by Rep. Tom Plant (D-Nederland) and Sen. Ken Gordon (D-Denver), the policy facilitates implementation of energy conservation programs by natural gas utilities in the state.

“HB 1133 will help households reduce their natural gas use and consequently their energy bills,” stated Howard Geller, Executive Director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP). “We estimate that HB 1133 will result in \$700 million in net savings for households. With natural gas prices skyrocketing, this legislation could not have come at a better time.”

HB 1133 directs the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to establish a cost recovery mechanism and provide a positive financial incentive for natural gas utility energy conservation programs. Once the PUC completes this work, HB 1133 directs gas distribution utilities to implement cost-effective energy conservation programs for their residential customers.

Natural gas distribution utilities in at least 20 states sponsor gas efficiency programs for their customers. The types of energy efficiency programs include:

- Paying a portion of the cost of energy audits for households;
- Increasing co-funding for weatherization of low-income households;
- Financing major retrofit projects at low to moderate interest rates;
- Providing rebates to those purchasing high efficiency gas furnaces, boilers, and appliances;
- Promoting and/or subsidizing gas furnace and boiler tune-ups.

Surging natural gas prices are sending our utility bills sky high. Reducing energy consumption will cushion the "hit" on our pocketbooks caused by rising energy prices. This past January, households served by Xcel Energy paid \$128 per month on average for natural gas alone. For comparison, the average monthly gas bill was \$62 in January 2003 and \$108 in January 2004.

“HB 1133 will save consumers money while reducing the consumption of precious natural gas. This means less pressure to drill for and produce gas in environmentally-sensitive areas,” said Stephanie Bonin, energy advocate for Environment Colorado.

Passage of HB 1133 follows the adoption of House Bill 1162 which establishes state energy efficiency standards on 14 products not covered by federal standards. “We applaud the legislature for passing House Bill 1133, and we urge Governor Owens to sign it into law,” added Geller.

About SWEEP: The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) is a public interest organization dedicated to advancing energy efficiency in six southwest states. See www.swenergy.org.

About Environment Colorado: Environment Colorado is the statewide environmental organization dedicated to protecting Colorado's air, water and open spaces. See www.environmentcolorado.org.