



Southwest Energy Efficiency Project

Saving Money and Reducing Pollution through Energy Conservation

PRESS RELEASE

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STATE LEGISLATURE REJECTS ENERGY BILL RELIEF Efforts Aimed at Reducing Consumer Energy Bills Meet Defeat

House Bills Would Have Expanded Utility Energy Efficiency Programs

(Boulder, CO) - - The Colorado House of Representatives' Technology and Information committee today rejected House Bill 1313, sponsored by Rep. Andrew Romanoff (D-Denver) and co-sponsored by Rep. Bill Briggs (R-Westminster), the second such bill aimed at reducing consumer energy bills to be defeated in House committees in the last two weeks. "We have brought the fight for lower energy bills to the Capitol in hopes of securing energy bill relief for Colorado consumers," said Howard Geller, Executive Director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP), a non-profit public interest organization advocating for energy efficiency in the Southwest. "As it turns out, a majority of legislators are not willing to stand up to Xcel Energy and support lower energy bills."

House Bill 1313 would have directed the Colorado PUC to establish that the goal of power utility resource planning is to minimize the total energy bills paid by consumers and businesses. In 2002, the PUC modified its rules to minimize consumer energy *rates* rather than *bills*. This change has hurt consumers because energy efficiency programs help consumers and businesses lower their energy use, but do not necessarily result in lower rates. The goal of resource planning in other states, including Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, is to minimize overall energy bills.

On January 28, the House Transportation and Energy committee killed House Bill 1184, sponsored by Rep. Betty Boyd (D-Lakewood) and co-sponsored by Rep. Mark Larson (R-Cortez), a bill which would have required Colorado investor-owned utilities to reduce their annual retail electricity sales 0.5% per year between 2005 and 2020. Adoption of the bill would have expanded the utility energy efficiency programs available to Colorado residents and businesses.

By 2020, HB 1184 and HB 1313 would have saved Colorado's families and businesses over \$1 billion net, reduced Colorado's energy use by 7.5%, eliminated the need for one or more power plants totaling 450 MW in capacity, and saved 1.3 billion gallons of water annually. "The state legislature had two opportunities to take action and address Coloradan's skyrocketing energy

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costs, and both times they said no,” added Geller. “That these bi-partisan efforts failed despite the public’s overwhelming support for energy efficiency tells us that our state legislators are listening to the utility industry lobbyists rather than their constituents.”

A February 2003 survey of registered voters conducted by the Wells Fargo Public Opinion Research Program at the University of Colorado-Denver found that, when asked to choose between two approaches to meeting increased demand for energy, 72% of respondents said that utilities should “reduce the need for more power by helping customers use energy more efficiently.” Only 23% said that utilities should “generate additional electric power.” To view the entire survey, visit www.swenergy.org/news/renewablessurvey.pdf.

“These two bills were modest first steps to reaching attainable energy efficiency goals and provided a win-win opportunity for Colorado consumers, businesses, and environment,” stated Geller. “With energy costs continuing to rise, we need these programs now more than ever.”

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.