

February 23, 2010

Citizens Group, Energy Efficiency Workers Call for Stronger Michigan Energy Efficiency Standard

Report shows stronger standard will help reduce energy costs for families, create Michigan jobs

LANSING – *ReEnergize Michigan!* partners, along with energy efficiency professionals, unveiled a new report today (<http://www.mwalliance.org/meea-publications/meea-report-expanding-michigans-energy-optimization-standard>) that found thousands of jobs could be created and billions of dollars could be saved in Michigan with a stronger energy efficiency standard. *ReEnergize Michigan!* is a coalition of businesses, labor, consumer, citizens, faith and other groups fighting to build a strong energy future for Michigan.

“Energy efficiency means slashing waste, increasing savings, cutting costs and creating jobs. That’s, why Michigan must act quickly to strengthen our energy efficiency standard,” said **Mike Shriberg** of the **Ecology Center**, a member of *ReEnergize Michigan!* “Strengthening the standard will help move Michigan in the right direction and give us the tools to compete in today’s energy economy. Michigan can create more than 7,600 in the energy efficiency industry if we strengthen our energy efficiency standard.”

Michigan’s current energy efficiency standard requires that utilities reach annual efficiency savings of 1 percent for electric power and 0.75 percent for natural gas by 2012, measured as a percentage of total annual retail sales. A new report released today by Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, “Expanding Michigan’s Energy Optimization Standard,” shows that Michigan could increase the number of jobs in its energy efficiency sector to over 7,600 jobs if it doubled its current standard by 2019.

“Energy efficiency is the best way to put money back into consumers’ pockets and put Michigan back to work,” said **Sam Flannery** of the **Building Science Academy**, which trains Michigan citizens in homebuilding, construction and energy efficiency. “Every day, we see how energy efficiency is providing new opportunities to people across Michigan, from helping workers get a new job to cutting energy bills for homeowners to helping businesses strengthen their bottom lines and create jobs.”

Investments in energy efficiency create jobs throughout the state. Unlike coal or nuclear power, virtually all the money spent on installing efficiency measures stays within the state, as local labor is used for energy efficiency installations. Jobs created by efficiency investments include energy auditors and technicians, electricians, heating and cooling contractors, pipefitters and plumbers, builders and contractors, manufacturers, and program administrators. Efficiency upgrades drive demand for products made by Michigan companies such as Guardian Glass and Dow. Retailers such as hardware, lumber, big box and department stores all benefit from energy efficiency programs as people buy windows, storm doors, caulk, insulation as well as new appliances, furnaces, washers and dryers.

“As a building contractor, I see firsthand how families and businesses are demanding more ways to save energy costs, and energy efficiency is the best way to reach that goal,” **Doug Selby** from **Meadowlark Home Performance** said. “Strengthening Michigan’s energy efficiency standards will roll out the welcome mat for more investments in energy efficiency, which will save money, keep our dollars in Michigan and create local jobs. We see it every day in our industry and we urge our leaders to give small businesses and working families the tools that can help us create energy jobs and save money.”

At a cost of 3 cents per kW/h, saving energy through energy efficiency makes better financial sense than building new generating capacity, which costs upwards of 12 cents per kW/h. Currently, total savings for Michigan customers is \$15.4 billion. According to the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, doubling that standard would save customers over \$22 billion.

“Saving energy through greater efficiency will slash utility bills for consumers and businesses, a crucial cost savings in these tough economic times,” said **Gayle Miller** of the **Sierra Club**. “Energy efficiency can help increase the value of a home or business and it helps people, especially seniors and people with medical conditions, stay more comfortable year round. Energy efficiency is vital to Michigan’s economy and our citizens’ quality of life.”

The three main methods of achieving energy efficiency are through weatherization, upgrading mechanical and lighting systems, and investing in energy efficient appliances.

“This plan is a win-win for Michigan that benefits ordinary families, businesses and future generations,” said **David Gard** of the **Michigan Environmental Council**. “Virtually every study on energy shows that energy efficiency provides the greatest bang for the buck, helping Michigan squeeze value out of every dollar invested. Now is the time to aggressively go after more jobs, and Michigan can do that with a stronger, more aggressive energy efficiency standard.”

If we fail to invest and capitalize on the cheapest form of energy, neighboring states that do will be more competitive. If our electric rates are too high, businesses won't come here. Investing in energy efficiency is the best way to keep Michigan competitive and create jobs.