
Energy bill could save consumers money

JUNE 23, 2007

Measure offsets appliance costs, supports power-conserving practices

By JEFF MONTGOMERY, The News Journal

State residents could begin joining a new energy conservation program as early as next year under legislation sent to Gov. Ruth Ann Minner this week, with backers predicting about \$1,000 in yearly savings to participating households.

The Sustainable Energy Utility proposal, expected to win Minner's signature, authorizes up to \$30 million in bond sales for conservation, including programs that help consumers offset the extra costs of buying premium, highly efficient "Energy Star" appliances.

Other provisions of S.B. 18 would support wider use of energy-saving building practices and small-scale renewable energy investments such as household solar panels for electricity and geothermal heating and cooling systems.

"With a third of those eligible participating, we will have the largest impact on energy demand and carbon emissions in the state, compared with the [other] policy options that we have available," said John M. Byrne, a University of Delaware professor who directs the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy.

Sen. Harris B. McDowell III, D-Wilmington North, and Byrne co-chaired a task force that developed the proposal, which was released midway through a continuing debate over the need for a multibillion-dollar investment in new power plants.

Officials estimated that the approach could cut energy waste by 30 percent by 2015.

Projects would initially be supported with bond proceeds, but the utility eventually would draw revenues from a portion of the energy credits that individuals and businesses receive for investing in alternative energy sources.

Byrne estimated that the approach could offset the need for about 300 megawatts of electricity generation in Delaware, averting the need for electricity from sources that generate carbon dioxide, a pollutant tied to global warming and climate change.

Three other energy measures are still pending in the General Assembly, including an increase in the utility bill portion dedicated to "green" energy projects, a doubling of requirements for the use of renewable energy by utilities, and an increase in the size of home or business generation projects eligible to sell power back to utilities.

Copyright © 2007, The News Journal. Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#) (Terms updated March 2007). [Questions?](#)