

Toward A Sustainable Future

By State Representative Marilyn Giuliano

Efforts are underway both in the legislature and the Governor's office to create an environmental vision for Connecticut that is cleaner, greener and renewable. These initiatives can be boiled down to one fundamental principle – environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability seeks to promote conservation, encourage innovation in energy efficiency technologies, and look toward energy diversification to address our long-term state needs.

As government develops environmental public policy, let me share some initiatives of note.

- That 20% of all energy sold and used in Connecticut come from clean or renewable resources, such as solar and geothermal energy;
- That as a state, we achieve a 20% reduction in peak electric consumption;
- That fossil fuel consumption be reduced;
- That all state and school construction projects incorporate energy efficiency technology;
- That residential and commercial heating oil sold and used in Connecticut contain a mandatory mix of 20% alternative fuels

During the 2007 session of the General Assembly, I co-sponsored legislation that will apply green building standards to new state construction projects, and will extend the property tax exemption for solar energy electricity generating systems. “Green” construction standards focus on energy efficiency, water conservation and solar access. These standards will now apply for new taxpayer-funded state and local buildings, will help curtail energy use, and will save operating costs over the 40- or 50-year life of new buildings.

Effective July 1, there is a permanent sales tax holiday on compact fluorescent light bulbs and Energy Star appliances. Those appliances exempt from the sales tax include refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, dishwashers, air conditioners, room humidifiers, water coolers and battery chargers.

One thing everyone can do to hold down electric bills and share the existing electricity supply is conservation. That includes improving home insulation, installing weather stripping, installing programmable thermostats, using more efficient appliances, and equipping lights with timers, photocells and motion-sensitive devices so they turn off when not needed.

New energy conservation legislation calls for the distribution of “smart meters” that will allow electric customers to pay at variable rates depending upon demand at the time the

electricity is being used. Smart meters are designed to encourage customers to switch electricity usage to off-peak periods when electricity is cheaper. At the same time, this reduces the peak load burden on our state's electricity grid.

Conservation alone cannot supply all the state's future energy needs. Certainly, it can slow the growth in usage, but the state needs to increase the supply of clean, affordable energy for schools, homes, hospitals and businesses. This session's energy legislation steps up the state's efforts to develop more forms of renewable energy, such as solar and geothermal energy.

As a state, our energy and environmental challenges are great. However, we must never underestimate the limitlessness of our resolve to work together to move each town, our state and this region of our country toward environmental conservation, innovation and sustainability. Cleaner, greener and renewable energy sources must be our shared goal.

If readers have questions on these or other state issues, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-800-842-1423.

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