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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES KANE COUNTY PROJECT TO USE ENERGY EFFICIENCY TO IMPROVE LOCAL ECONOMY AND BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

SPRINGFIELD – As part of his innovative program to spur economic development and create more jobs, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced **\$175,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funding to the Community Energy Cooperative to address important energy issues in Kane County. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's (DCEO) Regional Energy Program (REP) seeks to improve local economies and increase business competitiveness within Illinois communities through greater energy efficiency. The United States Department of Energy's (USDOE) Rebuild America Program jointly supports the project. This grant is part of *Opportunity Returns*, Governor Rod Blagojevich's regional, pro-active economic development program to create jobs and promote economic growth for the Northeast region.

"This important project will identify innovative energy efficiency measures that save money and reduce the need for new power lines in Kane County. These benefits are in addition to the economic and environmental benefits of reduced energy use. A county-wide energy efficiency program will positively impact our citizens, businesses, developers, county and municipal governments, and the utilities serving the area," Governor Blagojevich said.

Targeted energy strategies can delay or eliminate new infrastructure investments, and could produce two important outcomes for the county. First, citizens may be less impacted by new infrastructure, such as new power lines and/or new substations. Second, the potential for reducing infrastructure costs provides a new incentive for utilities serving the area to support electricity demand reduction efforts.

"Kane County is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States," said Kane County Board Chairman Michael McCoy. "Future energy planning to accommodate our growth projections has not been undertaken however. We feel the project as proposed by the Community Energy Cooperative will get us started in this very important field. We greatly appreciate Governor Blagojevich's and DCEO's support and vision of developing programs and policies that lessen our long term energy demand."

The Community Energy Cooperative will coordinate the project, which will focus on the proposed energy growth for Kane County and the potential for managing that growth through aggressive energy efficiency and electricity demand reduction strategies. It will also investigate the economic and environmental impacts such an effort can have on the county. Working closely with county officials, as well as other key leaders, the

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project team will identify the most promising and cost-effective strategies for managing electricity use. Project coordinators will then identify partners that can assist in implementing these strategies and educate county officials and key community leaders about energy efficiency and the policies and programs that affect energy use. In addition, the project will bring the innovative Energy-Smart Pricing Plan to residents of Kane County and study the potential for using this type of real-time electricity pricing strategy to promote energy efficiency, reduce peak electricity demand, and save local residents money on their electricity bills. The Kane County project is designed to identify and focus on strategies with the greatest potential to manage energy use and to benefit county residents and businesses. Once these high-impact strategies have been identified, the project team will create an implementation plan as well as a community outreach and education effort.

“Energy planning programs need to focus on the most promising strategies to impact future energy use and cost within the area,” said Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn. “This is particularly true in a growing community where strategic decisions about focus will have a major impact on future energy use. This week marks the one-year anniversary of the Northeast blackout that took place last August. It is important that the State of Illinois takes action to prevent a similar devastating blackout from occurring.”

“The timing is right,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said. “Decisions and actions taken now to plan for Kane County’s energy future will have far-reaching and lasting effects.”

If those choices properly account for demand reductions, energy efficiency and clean local generation, the county has the potential to ensure that its long-term energy infrastructure needs are met in an efficient manner that is consistent with its larger planning goals.

The Community Energy Cooperative is a non-profit membership organization helping consumers and communities obtain the information and services they need to control energy costs.

“The Cooperative is very excited about the prospect of working with Kane County and DCEO to develop energy tools and strategies local officials, communities, and residents can use in the energy planning process,” said Kathryn Tholin, general manager of the Community Energy Cooperative.

Working with state energy offices and Rebuild America, the Community Energy Cooperative will use \$100,000 from USDOE and \$75,000 from DCEO to accelerate energy efficiency improvements by adopting best practices and adding renewable-energy technologies in the following five sectors: public and multi-family housing, commercial buildings, colleges and universities, energy smart schools (K-12), and state and local governments.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from. Governor Blagojevich will announce his complete plan for the Northeast region in the coming months.

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