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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH BRINGS ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM TO ROCKFORD

Project will address Energy Efficiency as Key Strategy to Improving Local Economy and Business Competitiveness

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod Blagojevich today announced **\$70,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funds for a Regional Energy Program in Rockford. Administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the Regional Energy Program seeks to improve the local economy and business competitiveness within Illinois communities through increased energy efficiency. The United States Department of Energy's (USDOE) Rebuild America Program jointly supports the project. The funding is part of Gov. Blagojevich's pro-active, regional economic development plan designed to create jobs and spur growth in the Northern Stateline region and throughout the state. The programs will be executed through Rock Valley College.

“This comprehensive effort to improve energy efficiency in the Rockford area will pay off in terms of a stronger economy and more job opportunities,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “Through energy efficiency improvements, businesses, communities, and schools can work together to reinvest more money in the local economy by cutting energy costs. These are exactly the kinds of projects that *Opportunity Returns* will continue investing in.”

Among the central components of the program are efforts to train home builders, engineers, and architects to implement energy efficiency improvements, to help businesses understand the importance of controlling energy costs, and to encourage home and rental property owners and home builders to invest in energy saving devices and option packages.

“The Regional Energy Program brings energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies and solutions to homes, businesses and communities in Illinois. Through our partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy's Rebuild America Program, we are able to highlight successful energy programs from around the state and provide unique networking tools and technical assistance to develop community energy projects for Illinois,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Educational opportunities will be offered to businesses to assist them in analyzing current energy related costs and to identify opportunities to protect profits through implementing effective energy efficiency measures. Emphasis will be placed on building envelope assessment, lighting upgrades and assessment of readiness for energy efficient retrofits, including geothermal. Assistance will also be provided to residents to help with energy analyses.

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The education component will expand on existing energy education offerings through Rockford's Discovery Center Museum. Teachers and students will learn to appreciate the cost of energy waste and the value of energy efficiency. The math and science of energy will be integrated into hands-on educational experiences, with a particular focus on clean energy, as the Museum enters into the next phase of planning for a major expansion project.

Gov. Blagojevich's *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. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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