



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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**CONTACTS:**

Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Gerardo Cardenas	312/814.3158 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.8193 (Opp. Returns)

## **GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$400,000 *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* GRANT TO SUPPORT CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION FROM OLNEY WASTEWATER SYSTEM**

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod Blagojevich today announced **\$400,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funding to support the reconstruction of the Olney wastewater treatment facility and the production of clean, renewable energy from local wastewater. The funding is coming as a part of *Opportunity Returns*, Gov. Blagojevich's historic, regional economic development plan to spur growth and job creation across the Southeast region and throughout the state.

"Sound and reliable infrastructure is an essential foundation of any community and critical to its capacity to attract new business and create new jobs. Through *Opportunity Returns*, Olney will not only be able to strengthen that foundation, but also make use of an effective renewable energy strategy that has a great economic upside. Across the Southeast region and throughout the state, we'll continue funding these kinds of important projects that are beneficial to both the environment and our economy," Gov. Blagojevich said.

Olney will receive the funds to repair its primary anaerobic digester (which breaks down the wastes and produces natural gas), install a new gas collection and clean-up system, and install a new boiler system at the city's wastewater treatment facility. This grant, administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), will provide \$300,000 from the Renewable Energy Resources Program, as well as \$100,000 in emergency Community Development Assistance Program funds. Olney will provide \$346,000 of local funding for the project.

The cover on the primary digester collapsed last summer and was removed, leaving the facility unable to function as efficiently and effectively as designed. The new cover for the anaerobic digester will reduce the odors at the facility and allow it to capture the natural gas from the decomposition of the wastes. Olney estimates that the addition of the gas recovery and clean-up system, as well as the new boiler, will save more than \$26,000 per year in energy costs.

"Gov. Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* program is proving itself to be a responsive and effective model for economic development. Without these type of partnerships between state and local governments, small communities like Olney may be unable to meet unforeseen fiscal challenges and be discouraged from investing in innovative energy programs with economic benefits such as this one," State Representative William Grunloh (D-Effingham) said.

(more)

DCEO's Renewable Energy Resources Program supports renewable and clean energy projects, similar digesters for livestock operations with large waste streams, and wind power and solar energy initiatives.

"Gov. Blagojevich strongly supports the goals of our Renewable Energy Resources Program, which are to achieve environmental quality, public health and fuel diversity benefits. This *Opportunity Returns* grant to Olney is a great representation of the program because the funding will be used to accomplish all three of these key objectives," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

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. Developed largely from the input of local business, labor and public sector leaders, *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses.

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