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Media Advisory

EFFICIENT AND RENEWABLE ENERGY BILL ADVANCES FROM HOUSE COMMITTEE

Statewide Policy Would Bring Jobs, Investment to the State

OLYMPIA -- A landmark bill that promises to create thousands of jobs, revitalize rural communities and deliver long-term benefits to energy consumers and the environment advanced from the House Technology, Telecommunications and Energy Committee Wednesday night.

Substitute HB 2333 would establish Washington's first statewide policy on developing energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. It directs electric utilities to do long-range planning and include increasing amounts of new renewables and efficiencies in their mix of energy sources.

As approved on a bi-partisan committee vote, the bill applies equally to investor-owned and public utilities throughout the state. Exemptions are made for small utilities, those who've gone five years with no increase in energy demand, and certain industrial customers.

Utilities would be required to meet 5 percent of their load with new renewable energy -- from such sources as wind, solar and biomass -- by 2010, 10 percent by 2015 and 15 percent by 2023. Similar benchmarks have been proposed for energy efficiency gains.

By adopting this policy, the legislature would help to create a predictable market to attract renewable-energy developers and energy efficiency industries to this state. Washington has abundant wind, biomass and solar resources, and turning those resources into electricity would bring much-needed income to farmers and rural communities.

Policies such as those established by SHB 2333 are crucial for capturing the benefits of these resources. The accompanying report on 2003 wind development in the United States shows a direct relationship between states with renewable energy standards and significant current advances in actually putting facilities on the ground.

Establishing an energy efficiency and renewable energy policy is one of the Washington state environmental community's four legislative priorities for this year's session. A recent scientific poll of Washington state voters showed overwhelming support for statewide efficiency and renewables standards from Republicans and Democrats on both sides of the Cascades.

For more information on SHB 2333, contact committee chair Rep. Jeff Morris at (360) 786-7970, or any of the following spokespersons for the four organizations that helped craft the legislation:

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