



Public Citizen's Texas Office Award Winning Advocacy

Public Citizen Texas office: Air Quality 2006 Conference "Outstanding Non-Profit Organization Award"
 Tom "Smitty" Smith, State Director: Campaign for People's "Thomas Paine Award"
 U.S. EPA's "Award of Excellence"
 2001 Austin Chronicle Best of Austin "Best People's Lobbyist"
 Public Citizen's Solar Austin Campaign: Livable City "Vision Award"
 Interstate Renewable Energy Council "Innovation Award"
 2004 Austin Chronicle Best of Austin "Best Grassroots Effort"
 Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association "Special Recognition Award"

March 16, 2009

The Honorable Carol Kent
 Room E2.814, Capitol Extension
 P.O. Box 2910
 Austin, TX 78768

Dear Representative Kent,

I am writing to follow-up on questions you asked during the March 9, 2009, public hearing of the Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding regarding Public Citizen's position on the use of stimulus funds for advanced meters and weatherization. Below please find our positions on each respective issue.

Public Citizen's position on stimulus funding for advanced meters

Public Citizen supports the deployment of advanced meters in Texas with stimulus funds so long as consumers are not inappropriately overburdened with the cost of implementation. The advantage of advanced meters, and smart grid development in general, lies in the potential for greater control on the part of ratepayers to change the way they use energy. Advanced meters represent the potential to increase a homeowner's knowledge and awareness of their own electric use, which can lead to lower bills through energy efficiency and conservation measures. In order to fulfill this potential, Public Citizen supports the addition of in-home monitors. Meters that do not include this feature do not fully achieve the potential to equitably share information. Advanced meters also represent the potential to convert Texas to a smart grid, enabling development of distributed renewable generation on a large scale.

In sum, Public Citizen supports the use of stimulus funding for advanced meters as long as meters are installed with in-home monitors and the costs to consumers are minimized to the greatest extent.

Public Citizen's position on stimulus funding for weatherization and the income threshold

Public Citizen supports raising the income threshold needed to qualify homes for free weatherization to 200% above the federal poverty line.

(Over)

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Currently in Texas, in order to qualify for free weatherization homes must earn no more than 125% above the federal poverty line. However, the weatherization funding included in the federal stimulus package sets the income threshold at 200% above the federal poverty line. In order to maximize the effectiveness of stimulus funding Texas needs to raise the threshold to at least 200%.

Weatherization is not only the fastest, cheapest, and cleanest form of energy, it frees up money in low to middle-income households by lowering utility bills on average 10-15%. An extra \$15 per month may not seem like a lot, but for an individual dependent on social security income of \$520 per month, it means a lot. Add to that, the health benefits that come from avoided pollution of natural gas and coal-fired power plants, and weatherization's value becomes even greater for those struggling to make ends meet.

In addition to raising the income threshold, agencies that receive weatherization funding from the stimulus package should implement a proactive approach to program implementation. Those that receive funding should implement a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach similar to the City of Houston and CenterPoint Energy's successful Pleasantville Weatherization Project.

To learn more visit: <http://www.greenhoustontx.gov/cpr/plcasantville.pdf>

Thank you for the questions you raised during my testimony. Public Citizen is available to answer any follow-up questions or concerns you or your colleagues might have.

Regards,

Matthew Johnson, Energy Efficiency Researcher/Organizer
Public Citizen-Texas Office

Cc: Rep. Jim Dunning, Chair

Rep. Myra Crownover, Vice-Chair

Rep. Garnet Coleman

Rep. Drew Darby

Rep. Craig Eiland

Rep. Solomon Ortiz, Jr.

Rep. Jim Pitts

Rep. Vicki Truitt

Leslie Lemon, Committee Executive Director