



Source: Environment Reporter: All Issues > 2009 > 03/06/2009 > Climate & Energy > Energy Efficiency: Congress Urged to Require 30 Percent Boost In Energy Efficiency Through Building Codes

40 ER 481

### **Energy Efficiency**

## **Congress Urged to Require 30 Percent Boost In Energy Efficiency Through Building Codes**

Congress should require states to draft new building codes stipulating at least a 30 percent improvement in energy efficiency over current standards, several witnesses agreed while testifying Feb. 26 before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

"Doing it on a state-by-state basis would take too long," Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Commissioner Philip Giudice told the senators.

Giudice's 30 percent recommendation was endorsed by other witnesses during the committee's hearing on ways to reduce energy consumption in buildings.

While a 30 percent improvement in energy efficiency would be a start, Giudice said a 50 percent mandate "would push us even further faster on this."

Buildings account for 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption and represent a "relatively inexpensive" way to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions as the Senate contemplates a new energy bill, committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) said.

In addition to directing states to write tougher energy efficiency building codes, Arun Majumdar, director of the Environmental Energy Technologies Division of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, said the federal government needs to invest more in energy efficiency monitoring programs, enabling building occupants to track their energy consumption in real time and modify behavior accordingly. Additionally, monitors would allow energy efficiency programs to be more effectively tested to determine what works best, Majumdar said.

"Design and actual performance do not always match," he said.

### **Home Investments Could Save Energy**

The building sector's energy consumption outstrips both transportation and manufacturing and is growing at a faster rate, according to a detailed analysis by Architecture 2030 presented at the hearing.

The nonprofit group, which works to reduce carbon emissions from the building sector, has challenged the building sector to reduce energy consumption by 50 percent below regional averages from all new construction and major building renovations immediately, with a goal of constructing carbon neutral buildings by 2030. Buildings account for 48 percent of the nation's carbon emissions, according to Architecture 2030.

"That would create 9 million jobs instantly," Architecture 2030 Executive Director Edward Mazria said. "You basically bring back every conceivable industry in the United States because they are all tied to building."

Mazria also called on Congress to invest \$200 billion over the next two years to buy down mortgage interest rates for homeowners who invest in energy efficiency.

Ward Hubbell, president of the Green Building Initiative, said programs that tie energy savings to financial savings could spur increased interest in investing in building energy efficiency.

"A plaque on the wall isn't the objective," Hubbell said. "The performance goal is the objective."

*By Andrew Childers*

ISSN 1521-9410

Copyright © 2009, The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc.. Reproduction or redistribution, in whole or in part, and in any form, without express written permission, is prohibited except as permitted by the BNA Copyright Policy.  
<http://www.bna.com/corp/index.html#V>