

ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES

non-daily  AP newspaper of the year

ACC proposal to eliminate energy efficiency standard a multi-billion dollar loss for AZ consumers

By: Guest Opinion  November 17, 2014 , 11:45 am



Two weeks ago, the Arizona Corporation Commission released a proposal that would eliminate the state's hugely successful energy efficiency standards, a move that would deprive consumers of billions of dollars in energy savings and kill thousands of jobs.

The proposal would decimate the Arizona Energy Efficiency and Resource Standard, which requires electric utilities to reduce their overall energy usage by 22 percent

by the year 2020 through the implementation of energy efficiency measures at homes and businesses across the state. The commission proposal would also destroy the Natural Gas Energy Efficiency Standard, which tells gas utilities they must do more with efficiency.



Kris Mayes

By eliminating energy efficiency, the commission would be giving a green light to big utilities to build expensive power plants rather than implement less costly energy efficiency measures.

It simply costs less money to save energy than it does to allow the utilities to overbuild new power plants, making energy efficiency the conservative, fiscally prudent approach to providing energy in Arizona.

Put another way: This is a multi-billion dollar give-away to the state's regulated utilities, at the expense of almost every Arizonan.

Amazingly, this proposal was released despite the fact that not a single utility, energy company or ratepayer advocate is suggesting that the standards should be eliminated.

In fact, last spring the commissioners hosted a series of workshops on energy efficiency, in which virtually all of the evidence pointed to its enormous success in creating in-state jobs and reducing waste at the state's utilities. The testimony at that meeting proved that we made the right decision in 2010, when I joined with my former fellow commissioners in unanimously voting to approve the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards.

Since that time, the standards have saved Arizona consumers and businesses more than half a billion dollars. They have also saved enough electricity to power 133,000 homes. Indeed, study after study has shown that it is five to ten times cheaper to save energy than it is to generate it from new power plants. And that is precisely what we are doing with the Energy Efficiency Standard: giving Arizonans the tools they need to save energy, send fewer dollars to the big utilities, and make our economy stronger.

Moreover, it is estimated that the standards will help create more than 10,000 jobs, mostly among the Mom and Pop contractors, who are assisting with the implementation of energy efficiency measures like energy audits, LED lighting and high efficiency air conditioners and pool pumps.



As a result of the Energy Efficiency Standards, Arizona has catapulted to fourth in the nation for the amount of energy efficiency being done by electric utilities and their customers – something about which we can truly be proud. Arizona is finally gaining some positive national attention, and it's for our focus on cutting waste.

And yet, apparently, there are still some who can't see the light about energy efficiency.

The advocates of doing away with the Energy Efficiency Standard suggest that somehow it has become too costly, when precisely the opposite is true: Energy efficiency is the cheapest form of energy around, and we need to be doing more, not less, of it.

The proposal to allow utility waste and decimate energy efficiency is also being done hastily, and without sufficient opportunity for input from consumers and businesses. The proposal was released on Election Day and is being rushed through the commission without an adequate time period for individuals to comment on such substantial changes.

I call on the Corporation Commissioners to reject this bad proposal, and make it clear that they stand with people of Arizona and their pocketbooks, and not with big utilities and their bottom lines.

- Kris Mayes is the former chairwoman of the Arizona Corporation, serving from 2003 to 2010. She is currently a professor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

Tweet 5 Like 26 +1 0 Share 7

