



Press Release

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Energy Leaders Meet to Debate Pennsylvania's Home Energy Future

Local and national residential energy efficiency experts will convene in Harrisburg on Wednesday, September 5 for a one-day forum on residential energy efficiency. The ACI Home Energy Forum, hosted by Affordable Comfort, Inc., will be held at the Harrisburg Hilton, and is designed to influence Pennsylvania's energy policy debate set to resume at the Capitol on September 17.

Pennsylvania is at a crossroads. Governor Rendell's Energy Independence Strategy and the work of some legislators are intended to solve a number of energy and environmental issues that confront Pennsylvanians:

- Electric rate caps, which limited electric rate increases for 10 years, are due to expire as early as 2008. Some rural electric cooperatives have already raised rates as much as 60%.
- Heating oil and natural gas prices are twice what they were in 2000, and unlikely to go down.
- World pressure is building to take immediate action to curtail climate change and the effects of global warming. Pennsylvania is the 3rd highest source of CO2 emissions in the country.

Many valuable strategies have been put on the table in Harrisburg, but one key element has been slighted. Residential buildings account for 24% of the energy used in Pennsylvania. Per capita electricity used in homes increased by 1,090 kWh between 1980 and 2001, representing an annual average increase of 1.6%. Making homes more energy efficient is one of the best solutions for warding off the effects of electric and heating fuel increases, and for impacting climate change. Other states in the Northeast have adopted aggressive programs, such as ENERGY STAR® for Homes, to help homeowners and renters save energy and money. Tax credits and rebates for energy efficient appliances will help, but the big ticket item for most homes is heating and cooling.

Leading experts will share what has worked in other states for the residential sector. These include Steve Cowell of Conservation Services Group; David Lee, ENERGY STAR Residential Branch, U.S. EPA; Rick Gerardi of Lockheed Martin; and Bill Prindle of the American Council for Energy Efficient Economy. Representatives of the Public Utility Commission, PHFA, government agencies, local energy groups and the PA legislature will also speak. ACI, a non-profit organization, which has trained building and weatherization professionals for 20+ years, is hosting the Forum.

Decisions made in the next eighteen months will set a path for energy policy, rate structure, and consumer action. Each of these will have a direct impact on economic development, job creation, and quality of life in Pennsylvania communities for decades to come.