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**Fifth-Year Anniversary of Utility Energy Efficiency Law Emphasizes Success of Citizen and Business Participation**

**Media Event and Tour on Thursday, June 7, outside 1515 Restaurant, 15<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets in Denver, 11 a.m. includes state representative Claire Levy, energy efficient businesses and homeowners**

DENVER—It's been five years since the Colorado legislature passed a law, HB 07-1037, which directed the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to develop energy efficiency goals and incentives for the state's investor-owned utilities including Xcel Energy Inc. and Black Hills Energy Corporation. As a result, the electric utilities invested \$166 million in efficiency programs for their business and residential customers. In hindsight, was it worth it?

Gene Tang certainly thinks so. The owner of 1515 Restaurant in Denver says utility rebates lowered his cost to \$3,000 on the purchase of a new high-efficiency air conditioner and furnace for the restaurant. Plus, he saves \$1,500 annually on utility bills, he said.

Thousands of Colorado businesses and homeowners have stories similar to Gene's, and collectively they will save a total of \$640 million through lower utility bills as a result of the utility programs. Energy efficiency building contractors, product manufacturers and vendors who are members of the Energy Efficiency Business Coalition now employ 1,000 workers in Colorado due to increased demand by people like Gene for energy-efficient products and services after the law was enacted.

"Energy efficiency is the quiet champion of the New Energy Economy," said Howard

Geller, executive director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET). “People tend to picture wind turbines and fields of solar panels, but the simple actions of hundreds of thousands of homeowners and businesses changing out light bulbs, upgrading appliances and air conditioning equipment and the like has yielded the cleanest, most cost-effective supply of energy today.” Geller works closely with utilities and regulators to develop energy efficiency policies and programs that are economically and environmentally sound.

Investor-owned utilities such as Xcel Energy and Black Hills Energy also are happy with results. Not only did they recover their collective \$166 million investment in energy efficiency programs under terms of the law, but they were awarded an additional \$45 million in incentives for exceeding goals for cost-effectiveness and energy savings achieved. In addition, the utilities saved enough electricity to power 100,000 houses for a year, according to their reports to the utilities commission.

Through efficiency, the utilities also found a way to get closer to their customers by offering technical assistance, rebates and other services. The utilities work as partners with communities and businesses on outreach, training, energy audits and rebates that help the utilities reach their goals for energy savings while helping customers save energy and money on utility bills.

“Through our demand-side management programs, Xcel Energy has been a partner in helping our residential customers reduce their bills – and in helping businesses large and small improve their bottom line and thrive. The energy efficiency programs we have offered to our customers have saved the equivalent of about one midsized power plant,” said Jay Herrmann, Xcel Energy vice president of marketing. “These programs also have been a part of Xcel Energy’s overall strategy to reduce our emissions, and thereby reduced our customers’ cost and risk associated with ever-tightening environmental regulations.”

Besides economics, a goal of HB-1037 was to curtail hazardous air pollutants and help protect Colorado's environment. SWEEP estimates that Xcel Energy and Black Hills Energy avoided more than one million tons of carbon dioxide emissions during 2009-2011 as a result of their energy efficiency programs, said Geller. That is the equivalent of taking 110,000 cars off the road.

Nobody could be happier than the bill's sponsor, state representative Claire Levy, who was researching it even before she was elected to office.

"House Bill 1037 has fostered an explosion of energy efficiency renovations that have reduced demand for heat and power beyond what I hoped to achieve," she said. "We aren't finished fostering energy efficiency work. There is still a lot of wasted energy and money to be saved. But House Bill 1037 has shown what can be accomplished if we create the right rewards."

Joan Fitz-Gerald, former president of the Colorado senate and the sponsor of HB-1037, said, "I was proud to sponsor a bill that created a more sustainable approach to energy consumption while saving consumers' money. Demand side management will ultimately allow us to improve the quality of life and health of our citizens even as the state population grows in years to come."

A five-year anniversary celebration and recognition ceremony was held at 1515 Restaurant at 15<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets in downtown Denver on Thursday, June 7 at 11 a.m. The event is sponsored collaboratively by Environment Colorado Research and Policy Center, CoPIRG Foundation, and SWEEP. Businesses and homeowners who have participated in utility energy efficiency programs will be on hand to share their stories, and Levy will be acknowledged.

But nobody is resting on laurels. In 2011, the utilities commission dangled a new carrot in front of Xcel Energy by raising the electric energy saving goals by 30%. As a result,

expect more programs to be unveiled by utilities and more savings for consumers and businesses.

Levy is talking about a new law that will provide utility energy efficiency programs to the 40% of Coloradoans that are served by small municipal utilities or rural cooperatives that are not affected by HB 1037. With some exceptions, customers of those utilities still do not have access to robust energy efficiency audits, rebates and other services.

The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project promotes greater energy efficiency in a six-state region that includes Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

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**Homeowners Who Have Completed Energy Efficiency Upgrades and Are**

**Available for Interviews and Home Tours:**

Phillip and Renee Trimble, Littleton CO: 303-972-8535

Jini Bates, Broomfield: 720-641-0101

Michelle Taylor, Lafayette: 303-434-0754