



Testimony by Kansas Interfaith Power & Light Director Rabbi Moti Rieber in support of HB 2663 – Establishing the Efficiency Kansas loan program

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of HB 2663. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I'm the Director of Kansas Interfaith Power & Light, a statewide nonprofit organization that engages faith communities in environmental stewardship and sustainable practices through the promotion of energy efficiency, energy conservation, and renewable energy.

The cheapest watt of energy is the watt we don't use, and energy efficiency (EE) has the potential to provide (through the efficient use of the energy we already generate) more power than any new coal, gas or nuclear construction – and a lot cheaper and cleaner too.

There are three main areas where we will see a benefit: saving homeowners money, maximizing our energy capacity, and increasing jobs and economic activity.

According to recent Department of Energy testimony before the US Senate¹, nationally

homes account for 33% of the nation's total electricity demand and consume approximately 22% of the nation's energy while generating 21% of the nation's overall carbon footprint. Roughly half of these homes were built before 1973, before modern residential building codes came into effect. With so many older homes, and with advances in building technologies, there is a tremendous opportunity to upgrade home energy efficiency by insulating; caulking; improving heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment (HVAC); tightening the building envelope; and adding other energy efficiency improvements. Existing techniques and technologies can reduce energy use by up to 40% per home and reduce associated GHG emissions by up to 160 million metric tons by 2020.

Many middle-class and working people in Kansas live in energy-inefficient homes, and their utility bills reflect that. We found during the period of the previous Efficiency Kansas program that many people would like to have efficiency work done on their homes, but they are often lacking the financial capacity on their own to undertake this work. That's where a low-cost loan program would be so beneficial to so many people around the state – saving them significantly on their monthly utility costs.

The second benefit is in our energy generation. In the current uncertain regulatory

¹ Statement of Cathy Zoi, Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, U.S. Department of Energy, Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, March 11, 2010.

environment, it is often difficult and expensive to build new capacity. According to a recent study by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), the average cost to a utility for EE measures is 2.5 cents per kWh. This compares to 6 cents or more for new wind, biomass or natural gas capacity, 8 cents to 14 cents for coal, and more than 10 cents for nuclear or solar.²

The governor talks about an “all of the above” energy policy, and I encourage you to think of efficiency, not as a state program, but as an energy resource – comparable to oil, coal, natural gas or any other form of generated energy. Efficiency can provide as much energy as any new production facility, and a lot cheaper, cleaner and quicker, with far fewer regulatory hassles.

And the third area where efficiency is of benefit is in the area of jobs and economic activity. EE is an economic development program, affecting every community in our state. This is skilled work and it can't be outsourced or moved. Given the troubled state of our construction industry, and the issue of depopulation in some of our rural areas, providing support for EE will provide much-needed jobs and economic activity all across our state.

There are two unanswered questions in this current legislation. The first is funding. In a time of budget scarcity, we will have to be innovative in finding the means to make this program a success. But EE has a very short payback – often less than two years - and anything we invest in this area will more than pay for itself.

The second issue I would bring to your attention is the inclusion of smaller houses of worship in the program. We found when discussing this issue with the Kansas Energy Office last year that small churches found themselves too big to be considered for the home-based program and yet too small for commercial incentives. Tax-based incentives also are little value to a house of worship that is property and income-tax exempt. Yet many churches are in inefficient buildings and they find themselves spending a large percentage their limited means on utilities – funds that they then cannot spend on faith education, mission, worship, or any of the areas that are their primary purpose. I hope the legislature and the KCC will take this into account and allow small-size churches to take advantage of a low-cost loan program.

In conclusion, I would like to say a word about stewardship. As a person of faith, responsible care of the natural resources that we have been given is an important issue for me. That's why I taught my children to turn off the water when they're brushing their teeth, and to turn off the lights when they leave the room. The efficiency Kansas program would simply be doing this on a larger scale – helping us to use what we have been given to its greatest capacity. It so happens that in this case, happily, doing the right thing has both economic and environmental benefits. That's why I encourage you to pass HB 2663, and support making energy efficiency a stronger priority in our future energy planning.

Thank you for your attention.

² “Avoiding a Train Wreck: Replacing Old Coal Plants with Energy Efficiency”, ACEEE White Paper, August 22, 2011, <http://aceee.org/white-paper/avoiding-a-train-wreck>