

RENEW Wisconsin

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RENEW denounces WMC's "fact-free flip-flop" in radio ad on energy bill

RENEW Wisconsin's Executive Director Michael Vickerman assailed the credibility of a new radio ad launched by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) that characterizes the Clean Energy Jobs Act bill as an unaffordable extravagance.

"WMC executed an astonishing fact-free flip-flop with its claim that the legislation (AB 649/SB 450) would raise an average family's electricity bill by more than \$1,000 a year. What's astonishing about it that WMC is conveniently forgetting existing ratepayer protections, which it endorsed – and claimed credit for -- when similar legislation passed in 2006," Vickerman said.

When the state's current renewable portfolio standard (RPS) was passed (which directed utilities to source 10 percent of their electricity from renewable generation by 2015), WMC ran an article on its website with the headline "'Energy Efficiency and Renewables Act' Will Protect Ratepayer Dollars." That article can be accessed at <http://www.wmc.org/display.cfm?ID=1256>.

The article says that WMC was instrumental in ensuring that "ratepayer groups will have a clear opportunity to seek delays in the implementation of new renewable portfolio standards, should they have an unreasonable effect on electric rates."

The Clean Energy Job Act bill would continue those ratepayer protections enacted in 2005 Act 141. So far no utility or energy advocacy group has requested an implementation delay under the current renewable energy standard.

In order for an average family's bill to increase \$1,000 a year, according to Vickerman, electric rates would have to double.

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“That will never happen because groups like WMC, Citizens Utility Board, and the Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group would intervene aggressively on behalf of their member using the existing ratepayer protections,” Vickerman stated.

Since the adoption of Act 141’s renewable energy requirements, Madison Gas and Electric’s residential ratepayers have seen annual increases of only 0.8 percent through 2009, even though the utility is already in compliance with the 2015 standard, added Vickerman.

“This outrageous claim is just another example of WMC’s decision to lob grenades instead of working constructively to forge a responsible partnership with all parties to create family-supporting jobs in the clean energy sector,” Vickerman said.

“It’s clear that WMC made up its mind to oppose the Clean Energy Jobs Act bill long before its contents were even known to the public,” Vickerman stated.

“There is no more obvious proof of this than WMC’s sponsorship of a so-called study by the Wisconsin Public Research Institute (WPRI) that claims that the bill’s provisions to expand renewable energy supplies would cost utilities \$16 billion.”

RENEW previously critiqued the WPRI report in a report titled “Think Tank Flunks Renewable Energy Analysis.” (http://renewmediacenter.blogspot.com/2009/12/think-tank-flunks-renewable-energy_22.html)

“WPRI’s assertions demonstrate yet again that if you torture your economic models long enough, they will confess to anything,” Vickerman said.

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RENEW Wisconsin (www.renewwisconsin.org) is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that acts as a catalyst to advance a sustainable energy future through public policy and private sector initiatives.