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Climate Policy Can Protect Low-Income Iowans Meeting in Council Bluffs is Opportunity to Discuss Options

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (June 9, 2008) — Enhancing Iowa’s leadership in energy efficiency while promoting better-paying “clean” jobs can help Iowa respond to the challenge of climate change.

A good place to begin would be Thursday when the Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council (ICCAC) meets in Council Bluffs.

“Energy efficiency is a front-line response that must be part of any strategy to address climate change,” said David Osterberg, executive director of the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project (IPP).

“Likewise, clean jobs should be a priority of state policy. When we offer subsidies and tax credits, we should make sure they’re not going to industries that compound our carbon emission problems. Instead, we should set meaningful and achievable standards for the renewable energy share of utilities’ energy sources — and we should take it a step further by demanding that our economic development strategies are consistent with efforts to encourage more sustainable energy technologies.”

An IPP report in March noted Iowa has a long tradition of energy-efficiency efforts through electric utilities, but said those efforts include significant duplication of effort and costs, and need fresh attention to improve their results.

Osterberg said the work of the Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council can help set the stage for critical policy discussions among the governor, state legislators and the Iowa congressional delegation.

“Low-income people bear a disproportionate burden from climate change as their costs rise and health suffers, while their resources can’t keep pace,” Osterberg said.

“But we can see this as an opportunity as much as a challenge. Innovation can help us cope with climate change, and help Iowa’s low-income families at the same time,” he added.

IPP and the Iowa Fiscal Partnership have produced several reports on climate change issues and economic development policy, the latter including a look at Iowa tax and grant subsidies often lacking in a strong link between job “incentives” and job quality.

“The growing interest in clean energy solutions and energy efficiency is a good place to connect those concerns to the need to reverse Iowa’s low-wage course,” Osterberg said.

IPP reports on energy, environmental, budget and job issues are at <http://www.iowapolicyproject.org>. The Iowa Fiscal Partnership (IFP) is a tax and budget analysis initiative of IPP and the Child & Family Policy Center in Des Moines <http://www.iowafiscal.org>.

Thursday ICCAC Meeting

The 9 a.m. meeting will be at the Holiday Inn Ameristar, 2202 River Road, Council Bluffs.

Members of the public may listen in to the meeting by calling 800-704-9804, code 484 447#.