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Maryland Passes Landmark Energy Efficiency Legislation

“EmPOWER Maryland” legislation provides the blueprint to reduce energy bills, improve the reliability of the electrical system, and cut greenhouse gas emissions

ANNAPOLIS, Md – The Maryland General Assembly responded to the leadership of Gov. Martin O’Malley by passing legislation last night that mandates a 15 percent reduction in per-capita electricity use by 2015.

“This bill is a win-win-win scenario. Energy efficiency will help the state meet its energy needs and emissions reduction goals, while simultaneously reducing the burden of energy bills on consumers,” said Reid Detchon, Executive Director of the Energy Future Coalition. “Thanks to the governor’s leadership, this is the first step toward reforming the role of utilities in Maryland – from simply providing energy at any cost to helping consumers reduce their consumption and lower their bills.”

At present, Maryland imports 30 percent of its power from neighboring states. Transmission lines are already near capacity during peak hours, and without reductions in energy demand, rolling blackouts will become a reality as soon as 2011, according to a recent study by PJM Interconnection.

“Maryland has set one of the most ambitious efficiency targets in the country,” said John Podesta, President and CEO of the Center for American Progress. “The state has catapulted itself into a leadership position, showcasing how energy needs can be met and climate change addressed in a way that benefits households and businesses.”

Serving Maryland’s energy needs with immediate efficiency gains is faster and cheaper than building new power plants. The Alliance to Save Energy estimates that each dollar Maryland invests in energy efficiency will drive economic returns of \$4 for the state. Those returns also show up on consumers’ bottom line. A recent review of the EmPOWER Maryland legislation by the Maryland Public Service Commission predicted that utility bill reductions would begin in the first year of program implementation and grow over time.

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About the Energy Future Coalition

The Energy Future Coalition is a broad-based, nonpartisan alliance that seeks to bridge the differences among business, labor, and environmental groups and identify energy policy options with broad political support. The coalition aims to bring about changes in U.S. energy policy to address the economic, security and environmental challenges related to the production and use of fossil fuels with a compelling new vision of the economic opportunities that will be created by the transition to a new energy economy.

Reid Detchon is Executive Director of the Climate and Energy program at the UN Foundation, in addition to his capacity as Executive Director of the Energy Future Coalition.