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RMCO Applauds Passage of Clean-Energy Bill

The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization (RMCO) applauds the final passage today by the Colorado General Assembly of House Bill 10-1001, strengthening the requirements for how much clean energy sources must be used by investor-owned utilities in producing electricity.

“This is the most important bill this year to reduce Colorado’s contribution to human-caused climate disruption,” said Stephen Saunders, the president of RMCO.

HB 10-1001 largely implements a key recommendation of the blue-ribbon Climate Action Panel that RMCO convened in 2006 to recommend ways to reduce our state’s contributions and vulnerabilities to climate change. Governor Ritter adopted as state policy the emission-reduction goals recommended by the Climate Action Panel in its 2007 report. HB 10-1001 implements, with respect to the state’s two investor-owned utilities, the panel’s recommendation for a 50% strengthening of the state’s renewable portfolio standard (RPS). Under the bill, those utilities would have to use clean sources to produce 30% of their electricity by 2020, rather than 20% as under current law.

The RPS-strengthening recommendation was approved by the 34-member Climate Action Panel by a super-majority vote, with only three dissents. A representative of Xcel Energy served on the panel and participated in shaping the panel’s recommendation. The support of Xcel was crucial to the passage of HB 10-1001.

Analysis done for the Climate Action Panel indicated that a 50% strengthening of the RPS for all utilities (not just investor-owned utilities) would achieve an estimated 9 percent of the emission reductions needed to meet the state’s climate-protection goal for 2020. That goal, as recommended by the panel and adopted by the governor, is that emissions in the state of heat-trapping gases be reduced by 20% compared to 2005 levels. That goal represents a 37% overall reduction in emissions of heat-trapping gases compared to the 2020 level expected under current law.

For all utilities, the costs of achieving the strengthened RPS were estimated to be \$16 per ton of carbon dioxide avoided. The analysis done for the Panel also suggested that utilities complying with the strengthened RPS would not build any more new coal-fired power plants in the state before 2020 and would instead meet their new energy supply needs through a combination of clean sources and demand-reduction measures.

The Climate Action Panel recommendation addressed Colorado's two investor-owned utilities, Xcel Energy and Black Hills Corporation, which supply about 60% of the electricity used in Colorado, and also municipal and cooperative utilities. The bill given final passage today by the Colorado General Assembly addresses only the state's two investor-owned utilities. RMCO continues to support a 50% strengthening of the RPS for other utilities, from the current 10% clean-energy requirement for them to 15%, as recommended by the panel.

The full analysis on which the Climate Action Panel relied, its reasoning, and its votes are spelled out in the Panel's report, at www.coloradoclimate.org.

RMCO testified in the House and Senate in support of HR 10-1001. RMCO is a mainstream coalition with 26 partner organizations, including 14 local governments; Denver Water, Colorado's largest water provider; 5 businesses; and 6 nonprofit organizations. We work to keep the West a special place by reducing climate disruption and its effects here.

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