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New Study: More than 1,130 Ohio Businesses Involved in Ohio's Green Economy

Columbus, OH – Ohio has more than 1,130 businesses involved in the energy efficiency industry, according to a new report by Environment Ohio, “*Ohio's Green Energy Economy: the Energy Efficiency Industry.*”

From home energy raters, to green architects, to retailers of energy efficient products, the report identifies businesses throughout the state that are already contributing to Ohio's clean energy future. The report was released at a green business forum in Columbus this weekend, which featured a panel discussion with business and policy leaders.

Congresswoman Mary Jo Kilroy kicked off the panel with a rousing keynote speech and tied American prosperity with our ability to become a “global leader in the development, production and use of clean and renewable energy.” She noted that, “we spend a billion dollars a day on foreign oil and efforts like these will help cut that figure, creating thousands of new jobs and securing clean energy sources made right here in America.”

National security and jobs were consistently cited by experts on the panel as the best reasons to improve efficiency. Eric Zimmer, CEO of Columbus-based Tipping Point Renewable Energy, stated that his company is focused on creating “good jobs in our local communities by deploying clean energy technologies.” Tipping Point has a current initiative to help veterans returning from war to launch a new career path in clean energy.

Zimmer pointed out policies on both the state and federal levels that can reduce our dependence on foreign oil and create jobs, stating the “key to creating more jobs is clear energy policy that sets strong market signals that allow companies and investors to move forward. Federal legislation focusing on clean energy as well as local municipalities choosing to implement municipal financing for energy projects are two of the key measures to unlock this job growth.”

Environment Ohio teamed up with Ohio's leading supplier of green building materials, Greenovate, to host the forum. Tyler Steele, owner of Greenovate, emphasized the need for businesses, non-profits, and government to work collaboratively on green economy initiatives. “Greenovate is very happy to partner with Environment Ohio and spread good news about Ohio's economy,” stated Steele. “Through collaborations we are able to continue to educate and build the market for energy efficient, environmentally sound and healthful buildings and homes.”

Key findings of the report include:

In total, more than 1,130 businesses in Ohio work to increase energy efficiency:

- At least **52** businesses in Ohio *perform energy audits*, an important first step in improving the energy efficiency of a home or building.

- Energy auditors find places where energy can be saved in buildings by looking at a building as an integrated system, and by using an array of tests to find air leaks.
- At least **78** Ohio businesses and community organizations *weatherize buildings*, which reduces natural gas heating bills by an average of 32 percent by sealing air leaks and improving insulation.
 - Weatherization funds have directly led to new jobs. Since the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 increased funding for low-income weatherization services by five-fold and added a tax credit available to any homeowner for weatherization, Ohio weatherization services have expanded to meet the growing demand.
- At least **109** businesses in the state *manufacture energy efficient products*, such as insulation, high quality doors and windows, and Energy Star appliances.
 - Energy Star products, such as dishwashers, televisions and furnaces, can save up to 75 percent of the electricity used to run these products compared with standard models. Improving insulation can result in savings of up to 30 percent off a building's energy bills. Programs that encourage consumers to upgrade their buildings' efficiency create a surge of replacements and demand for new products, boosting manufacturing.
- At least **215 homebuilders and architecture firms** in Ohio design and construct Energy Star-certified homes.
 - Energy Star new homes typically use 20-30 percent less energy than a standard house, with an incremental cost of only about 2-3 percent of the total cost of the home, which can be rolled into a mortgage for immediate savings.
 - Their expertise in energy efficient building has allowed some of these firms to ride out the housing crash unscathed. For Doty & Miller Architects in Cleveland, which specializes in green buildings, 2007 and 2008 were the firm's best years in its 30-year history.
- At least **680** stores in Ohio *sell energy efficient products and appliances*, including outlets of large chains as well as specialized stores.
 - Programs such as additional home weatherization funding and the new federal "cash-for-appliances" program can create a surge of demand for energy efficient products, bringing new business to stores that sell energy efficient products.

While Ohio has made good progress so far, the report concluded that several policy measures are needed to properly incentivize energy efficiency. Jeff McCourt, energy advocate for Environment Ohio, highlighted three key policy recommendations in releasing the report:

"First and foremost we need federal energy and climate legislation. Putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions at the federal level is the most efficient and equitable way to build a clean energy future for America. An analysis of legislation passed by the House last summer and currently being considered by the Senate, shows that Ohio consumers would save an average of \$744 per year by 2030 from energy efficiency provisions alone. We need Congress to act quickly to pass this legislation."

On the state level, McCourt stated, "the upfront capital costs of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments can be a barrier to entry for most of the potential market. While many of these investments pay for themselves in a few years and people want to 'go green', a majority of the market does not have the capital available to invest in energy efficiency."

“That is why Environment Ohio supports legislation in Ohio that would allow homeowners and businesses to amortize their clean energy investments over a 20 year period through their property taxes. This legislation, called ‘property assessed clean energy’ or PACE for short, would not cost the state or municipalities anything and is currently being considered by the Ohio legislature.”

McCourt concluded by recommending that Ohio update its building codes. “More than 40% of America’s energy goes towards heating, lighting, and powering the buildings we live and work in. But right now Ohio’s building codes are far out of date. Most of the new homes and offices built in Ohio immediately become candidates for energy efficiency retrofits. And since utilities will now be rolling out energy efficiency programs, utility rate payers could end up subsidizing the construction of inefficient buildings by paying more to retrofit them later. The 2009 International Energy Conservation Code is the recognized standard for minimum levels of building energy efficiency. If Ohio adopts the 2009 IECC, owners of new homes will save over \$200 in annual energy bills. That amounts to \$98 million in savings statewide by 2020.”

The report can be found on Environment Ohio’s website at www.EnvironmentOhio.org.

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Environment Ohio is a state-based, citizen-funded environmental organization working for a cleaner, greener, healthier future.