

Incentive to homeowners

Solar tax credit extended 5 years

By Penny Wright
Special Writer

Following overwhelming approval in the Michigan Legislature last week, the solar tax credit bill awaits Gov. James Blanchard's signature.

When signed, House Bill 4622 will extend through 1988 the system of granting state income tax incentives to encourage residential investments in solar, wind and water energy systems.

The Senate passed it 34-1. The House vote was 100-2.

The new tax credit will last five years and be more generous than present incentives.

Currently, a 10 percent credit on your state income tax bill is allowed for the first \$2,000 investment in renewable energy devices, and 5 percent for the next \$8,000 spent. Maximum credit is a total of \$500.

The new bill will allow a 30 percent tax credit for the first \$2,000 investment and 15 percent of the next \$8,000. A maximum credit of \$1,050 may be deducted directly from your state income tax obligation.

The new bill will be retroactive to Jan. 1, so the credit can be taken for the year 1983 when you file your return next April 15.

The bill eliminated a property tax credit for solar equipment.

LEGISLATIVE backers viewed the bill as a means of supporting development of a variety of energy resources within Michigan.

"Everyone believes we should explore lots of energy sources — this is critical," said Rep. Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park, a member of the House Taxation Committee, which reported out the bill.

"I don't think anyone in my district has solar. Maybe this will change that," said Webb, a first-term lawmaker whose district includes part of Troy.

State Sen. Philip O. Mastin, D-Pontiac, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, sees wisdom in encouraging development of solar resources.

"Solar has already proven itself in Michigan," Mastin said, pointing to a substantial shift to supplementary solar heating systems by homeowners.

"We should provide renewable energy incentives for the commercial and industrial sectors as well."

DAN SHARP, an aide to the bill's sponsor, Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, heralded the legislation as a push for one of Michigan's growth industries.

"Extending the tax credits is good for everyone," Sharp said. "The incentives will stimulate spending that will in turn generate jobs and economic spinoffs, plus annual energy savings (to homeowners)."

Sharp noted the higher percentage credit on the lower end of the cost scale.

"The high percentage up front will encourage the purchase of systems with the lowest costs and the quickest paybacks. It will mean more bang for the bucks," he said.

THE NEW BILL is a compromise of an earlier version which passed the House in September.

According to Joann Neuroth, director of the Michigan Energy Administration, the revised bill is wise to provide a more modest credit.

"I believe the credits will help expand the energy market," Neuroth said, "but I am hesitant about government subsidies of any fuel for very long."

She observed that the state's solar industry, which in 1981 ranked sixth in sales nationally, is approaching cost-competitive status.

The administrator said she sees solar energy as a supplemental technology which will become one resource for energy needs. "Solar will never be the sole source of heating here, but it will reduce the heating season and bring significant savings."

Neuroth cited Energy Administration reports which project accumulated savings just for the 4,500 solar systems installed in Michigan since 1981 at \$30 million by the year 2000.

The writer is a Plymouth free-lance who also teaches energy-related topics.

Superday events take national award

Oakland County Parks and Recreation commission received a National Recreation and Park Association award for its activities during "Life - Be In It" Superday on June 4.

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation earned a third place among organizations serving populations of more than 500,000.

The parks commission is especially proud of this award since Oakland County was surpassed only by two state organizations," said Oakland County parks manager R. Eric Reickel.

First and second place honors were taken by Virginia Parks and Recreation Society and State of Kentucky Parks and Recreation Division.

Reickel and Superday coordinator Monica Walsh accepted a plaque Oct. 5 from the NRPA Congress in Kansas City, Mo.

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