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PV-Pioneers Push for Alternatives to Rate Hike

PVREA rates have increased 24% in three years

Ft. Collins, CO – In response to Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association's (PVREA) proposed 10.6 percent average rate hike for its customers in 2008, the PV-Pioneers, a Colorado non-profit presented an alternative plan that would encourage Home Energy Makeovers for those PVREA customers least able to pay for a rate increase and least able to afford investments in energy efficiency. The plan was presented at a public rate-setting hearing held at PVREA headquarters in Ft. Collins on Tuesday, November 27. Immediately after the hearing concluded, the Board of Directors for PVREA passed the proposed rate increase unamended.

The Home Energy Makeovers program would allow structural energy efficiency improvements for those who need it most, including permanent housing weatherization improvements, replacement of inefficient appliances like air conditioners and refrigerators or, replacement of incandescent with compact fluorescent or LED lighting. "The program could be structured as a no-interest loan, with small paybacks spread out over time, explained PV-Pioneer Kevin Markey of Longmont, "the payments could then be used to leverage new efficiency investments and expansions in the program."

The plan would not replace the existing assistance program but would be offered as an additional alternative to existing home energy support programs. "The current program helps people pay their bills when they are too high -- and that is a good thing," said energy policy analyst and PVREA member, Tim Hurst, "but the problem is that it offers no incentive for people to permanently reduce those bills."

PVREA's rate hike comes amid growing concern about the buildup of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gasses in the atmosphere and their link to climate change. "Ever since the Supreme Court ruled that the EPA must regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant, utility companies are having an increasingly difficult time getting permits for new coal-fired generation" explained Hurst. Just last month, PVREA wholesale supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission was denied an air permit by the Kansas Department of Health for their Holcomb expansion in Western Kansas. "In stead of wasting money fighting the Holcomb decision, PVREA and Tri-State need to consider spending our money on long-term investments in energy efficiency, which is really the low hanging fruit."

The PV Pioneers is a Colorado non-profit group made up of Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association members from Larimer, Weld, and Boulder counties. The group works to promote energy efficiency programs, facilitate the generation of locally abundant renewable energy resources, to keep the lights on and the rates low.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with Tim Hurst or Kevin Markey, please call Tim Hurst at 970.988.6753 or email at tim@ecopolitology.org.