

Randy Brock's Thoughts on Energy Conservation

Conservation must be at the forefront of our efforts to reduce reliance upon fossil fuels, especially foreign oil. At the same time, we must recognize that individual Vermonters must decide, on their own, how much and to what extent they will conserve. The State of Vermont's job is to provide education and to promote public awareness as to the importance of conservation, and to provide information and guidance as to how best to achieve it. In addition, as a matter of public policy, Vermont should create incentives to encourage energy conservation.

Incentives, such as those offered in other states, could include:

- Rebates or sales tax exemptions for installation of new furnaces or boilers with more energy efficient models, especially those that meet Energy Star standards.
- Sales tax exemptions on home weatherization products.
- Use tax exemption on high mileage cars.
- Energy Conservation Loans, provided in conjunction with participating banks, to provide financing at below market rates to single family and multi-family residential property owners for the purchase and installation of cost-saving energy conservation improvements.
- Provision of private energy auditors who could advise homeowners of potential savings.

Efficiency Vermont, Vermont's efficiency utility, evidently plays a significant role in energy savings. However, as it is funded through charges on utility bills, many Vermonters, especially business users, view it as a hidden tax. The Legislature should ensure that Efficiency Vermont is independently audited, under the Legislature's standards and supervision, to assure taxpayers that it is performing its intended function and that the energy savings it reports are real and in the public interest.