



Michigan Interfaith Power and Light

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April 29, 2015

Dear Rep. Nesbitt and members of the House Energy Policy Committee:

Michigan Interfaith Power & Light, a non-profit that helps congregations become better stewards of the Earth through energy efficiency, has seen firsthand the positive impacts of PA 295's Energy Efficiency Resource Standard.

From 2009 to 2011, Michigan IPL partnered with DTE Energy to conduct basic energy assessments in 48 houses of worship in metro Detroit. The houses of worship received direct installations of about \$800 worth of efficiency upgrades, including basic items like CFL bulbs, LED exit signs, occupancy sensors, programmable thermostats, and door sweeps. Their energy usage before and after the upgrades was tracked and analyzed. By addressing these easy efficiency opportunities, the program demonstrated an average electricity use reduction of 11% across the 48 congregations and a total deemed savings of 487,021 kWh.

After participating in the program, 6 churches earned Energy Star certification. Michigan now has the highest number of Energy-Star certified congregations in the nation.

These successes were made possible by the Energy Efficiency Resource Standard. If the EERS were extended and expanded, we believe that utility-led programs—coupled with the learnings from this pilot study—could help us take this project to scale and significantly reduce energy demand in this sector.

The potential for reducing energy waste in Michigan's 10,000 congregations is tremendous. Traditional religious architecture, with its high ceilings and old, stained-glass windows is often highly energy inefficient. As utility bills rise amid tough economic times, decreasing tithes and declining membership mean many faith communities struggle simply to stay afloat. To put a fine point on it, some congregations are left with a stark choice: to keep the lights on, or to save a soul.

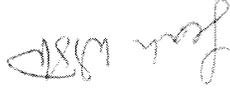
Pilgrim Baptist Church is one such congregation. Located in Conant Gardens in North Detroit, it has been served by Pastor Sidney Griffin and Co-Pastor Yvette Griffin for 29 years. The congregation is small, but the church is a bustling neighborhood hub, committed to nourishing—with spiritual guidance and food alike—the community around it. Each week, the church distributes up to 20,000 pounds of food to hundreds of seniors, working families and other area food banks. It also provides computer classes and wants to develop transitional housing for veterans.

But several years ago, Pilgrim Baptist couldn't afford to pay its utility bills. At the same time, the economic downturn meant their coffers were light and their service to the community was ever more critical. On the verge of shut-off, the church connected with Michigan IPL and participated in our DTE energy efficiency pilot program. This program literally enabled Pilgrim Baptist keep their lights on and their doors open. After an additional round of upgrades, the church earned Energy Star-certification.

Gov. Snyder has said that energy efficiency is a no-brainer. And because it is so obviously beneficial—the thinking goes—households, businesses and other institutions will choose to invest in energy efficiency. But as Pilgrim Baptist's story illustrates, good intentions sometimes need the help of smart policy and effective programs to be made manifest.

While the examples I've shared here show just a couple of ways in which the EERS has been successful in reducing energy demand, the effectiveness of Energy Efficiency Standards versus other policy strategies has been empirically demonstrated. Marty Kushler (formerly of the MPSC) and the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy show that states with an EERS significantly out-perform those states without EERS. In fact, EERS states show over three and a half times as much savings (1.11% vs. 0.30%) as the non-EERS states, regardless of whether or not the state has an IRP policy.¹ As Michigan faces a projected generation shortfall, we need to put effective policy into place now. The EERS is a tried and true way to achieve energy savings in Michigan and across the country. I urge you to help our state build on this success by extending and strengthening this standard.

Sincerely,



Leah Wiste

Outreach & Advocacy Coordinator

¹ Kushler, Martin, "IRP vs. EERS: There's one clear winner among state energy efficiency policies." <http://aceee.org/blog/2014/12/12/irp-vs-eers-there%E2%80%99s-one-clear-winner->