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Gov. Blagojevich sets goal to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Illinois

Climate Change Advisory Group meets to address the serious and urgent issue of global climate change

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich today announced a statewide goal to slash the production of heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHGs) to 1990 levels by 2020 and 60 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The GHG goals are part of a long-term strategy by the state to combat global climate change and builds on steps the state has already taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to protect the environment and public health.

The announcement comes as Gov. Blagojevich's Climate Change Advisory Group prepares to meet to address the serious and urgent issue of global climate change. The Governor charged the advisory group with recommending strategies to meet these GHG reduction goals. The advisory group, comprised of business leaders, labor unions, the energy and agricultural industries, scientists, and environmental and consumer groups from throughout the state, will meet over a six-month period to identify measures to cost-effectively reduce greenhouse gases.

"The impact of global warming in Illinois and around the globe could be devastating, and we can't wait for the federal government to act because scientists worldwide have warned that we must address climate change within the next decade to avoid serious and irreversible consequences," said Gov. Blagojevich. "The international community recognizes that rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and unusual weather patterns are warning signs telling us that climate change is a reality. Now, despite inaction by President Bush, we must deal with it. By committing ourselves to action in Illinois, we can help minimize the effects of climate change and ensure our children and grandchildren inherit a healthy world full of opportunity."

Scientists have reached consensus that increasing emissions of carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels, methane from landfills and other sources of GHGs are trapping heat and warming the earth's atmosphere. These gases remain in the atmosphere for decades or even centuries. Earlier this month, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that heat trapped by GHGs are raising the temperature of the air and oceans, causing snow and ice to melt and sea levels to rise. More than 1,200 experts from 113 countries wrote and reviewed the report.

According to scientists, global warming could cause a variety of serious problems in Illinois, including more frequent droughts, flooding, and extreme heat events. Such changes could endanger public health, decrease agricultural production, overwhelm sewage infrastructure, and cause property damage. Increased temperatures could also lead to dangerous increases in the level of air pollution and to the introduction of non-native invasive species that could damage Illinois' ecosystems.

The Governor's GHG reduction goals are similar to goals set by other states and those proposed by U.S. Senators Lieberman and McCain. Scientists argue that global reductions of this magnitude are needed to minimize the impact of climate change.

"The goals the Governor has set will help the Climate Change Advisory Group identify

the key strategies needed to make meaningful reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases statewide while improving the competitiveness of Illinois' economy," said Illinois EPA Director Doug Scott. "From the Governor's Energy Independence Plan that will create thousands of jobs in the renewable energy sector, to powering state facilities with wind power, to the Illinois Conservation and Climate Initiative that helps farmers earn money by trapping carbon dioxide in the soil, Illinois is making a strong commitment to minimize the impact of global warming."

"Baxter International has found that pursuing long term GHG emission reduction goals produce not only great environmental results but significant economic and social benefits as well. Baxter's energy conservation efforts have resulted in an energy savings of over \$8 million for each of the last two years and, from 1996 to 2005, Baxter reduced energy-related GHG emissions by 27% per unit of production," said Art Gibson, Senior Vice President of Baxter International.

"Illinois is stepping up to advance needed policy solutions to our global warming problems while the federal government has lagged behind," said Howard Learner, Executive Director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center. "The Governor's Climate Change Advisory Group can help Illinois move to the forefront in developing more clean energy, cleaner cars and more energy efficient buildings that will help reduce global warming pollution. That provides benefits for our environment, our economy and future generations."

"Three cheers for Governor Blagojevich in taking on the most serious environmental challenge of our generation," said Rebecca Stanfield, State Director of Environment Illinois. "These reduction goals reflect the best current scientific consensus of the cuts we need to make to prevent the most catastrophic impacts of global warming."

The Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group will be chaired by Doug Scott, Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Vice Chairs include Michael Carrigan, Secretary/Treasurer, Illinois AFL-CIO; Art Gibson, Senior Vice President, Baxter Healthcare; and Howard Learner, Executive Director, Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest. The World Resources Institute will facilitate the Advisory Group meetings and provide technical assistance.

Other members of the Advisory Group include: ADM, Ameren, BP America Inc., Caterpillar, Inc., Center for Energy and Economic Development, Citizen Action of Illinois, Citizens Utility Board, City of Chicago, Deere & Company, Dynegy, Environment Illinois, Faith in Place, Ford Motor Company, League of Women Voters of Illinois, Midwest Generation, Midwest Wind Energy, NICOR, Natural Resources Defense Council, Phoenix Architects, Inc., Regional Transportation Authority, Scates Farm, Sieben Energy Associates, Sierra Club - Illinois Chapter, State Farm Insurance, United Transportation Union, University of Illinois – Chicago, University of Illinois - Urbana/Champaign, Village of Schaumburg, and Waste Management, Inc.

Today's announcement builds on steps already taken by Illinois to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

- This month, the Governor joined California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and executives from BP to launch the Energy Biosciences Institute to be based at the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign and the University of California, Berkeley. The \$500 million effort funded by BP will invest in research next-generation homegrown biofuels made from crops that will cut GHG emissions, boost America's energy independence and create new markets for Illinois farmers.

- In January 2007, Gov. Blagojevich celebrated final approval of rules he introduced to dramatically improve air quality and protect public health by dramatically slashing mercury, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from the three largest coal-fired power plant companies in Illinois, Midwest Generation, Ameren, and Dynegy. The agreements include commitments to shut down three of the oldest, least efficient boiler units, leading to a reduction of 2.1 million tons of CO₂ annually.
- Last fall, Gov. Blagojevich's announced his global warming initiative to combat global climate change. As part of the Governor's global warming initiative, Illinois joined New Mexico to become only the second state in the nation to join the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX). As a CCX member, the state makes a voluntary, but legally binding, commitment to reduce GHG emissions from state buildings and vehicle fleets.
- Last summer, Gov. Blagojevich announced an ambitious plan to meet the state's energy needs by investing in wind power and cleaner burning renewable fuels that will cut greenhouse gas emissions. The plan also includes a proposed pipeline to help capture carbon dioxide emissions from new coal gasification plants.
- Last July, the Governor announced the State of Illinois would begin powering 141 Springfield-based facilities under his control with clean renewable wind energy purchased from the Springfield's municipal utility company, City Water Light and Power.
- In early 2006, Illinois launched the Illinois Conservation Climate Initiative (ICCI) in partnership with the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) and the Delta Institute. ICCI offer farmers and other landowners the opportunity to earn and sell greenhouse gas emission reduction credits through CCX when they take steps to trap carbon dioxide and reduce methane emissions by using conservation tillage and planting grasses and trees. These practices keep carbon in the soil and plants instead of being released as carbon dioxide. Illinois is the first state to sponsor such a program. More than 200 landowners have enrolled 67,000 acres.
- The State has taken numerous steps to reduce GHG emissions from its vehicle fleet, including reducing the overall number of state vehicles by 11 percent, from 13,635 in 2003 to 12,100 now; increasing the number of flex fuel vehicles in the state fleet from 1,339 in 2000 (10 percent of fleet), to 1,944 now (16 percent of fleet); increasing the use of renewable and cleaner burning ethanol and biodiesel in the state fleet. More than 1 million gallons of biofuels have been consumed by state vehicles since April 2004.

These efforts not only curtail GHG emissions but save taxpayers money by limiting the state's use of electricity and petroleum-based transportation fuels.