

HIRE Minnesota

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY SIGNS THE ENERGY PROGRAMS BILL! 5/22/09

After months of organizing, outreach and education, the HIRE Minnesota coalition achieved a major victory today when the energy programs bill was signed into law by Governor Tim Pawlenty with \$2.5 million for green jobs training for low-income people and outreach programs. The bill also contains strong reporting requirements, which means state agencies that administer the funds will have to frequently report to the community on their progress toward training and hiring low-income people and people of color.

In total, the bill allocates \$200 million in federal stimulus funding to weatherize low-income homes and public buildings and to invest in other renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. Weatherization will make low-income homes and public buildings more energy efficient, reduce utility bills and help to ease the climate crisis.

HIRE Minnesota has been advocating for training, outreach and reporting requirements to ensure this bill will benefit all Minnesotans. Specifically, the bill includes:

- **\$1 million to train low-income people for weatherization jobs.** These funds will be distributed to partnerships between weatherization service providers and job training providers.
- **\$1 million for training low-income people in renewable energy and energy-efficiency trades.** These funds will be distributed through a competitive process.
- **\$500,000 for community-based nonprofit organizations to conduct outreach about renewable energy and energy-efficiency opportunities.** These funds will be distributed through a competitive application process by September 1, 2009. This portion of the bill will create outreach jobs, as well as ensure that low-income people know they are eligible for home weatherization and other energy services.
- Requirements for the Office of Energy Security (OES), the state agency that will administer the weatherization programs, to **publicize opportunities such as training, contracts and services to low-income communities and communities of color, including through "non-traditional" media.**
- Language that allows the state to give **preference to disadvantaged businesses and businesses in economically disadvantaged areas.**
- Reporting mechanisms, which will require OES to **demonstrate how these weatherization programs have benefited low-income and communities of color.** The agency will have to report its progress every three months, beginning on September 1, 2009.

These outcomes are critical in a legislative session that resulted in cutbacks to many

programs serving low-income communities.

The bill is also a big win for the environment. It allocates 13 times more funding to state weatherization programs than they typically receive in a year. Weatherization can reduce the energy required to heat and cool a home by 20 to 30 percent annually, dramatically decreasing a household's contribution to climate change.