



# Community News Announcement



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Contact:  
Barbara Robuck, Marketing and Communications  
Penn State University/EMS Energy Institute  
CUL-211  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone: 814-865-7380 E-mail: bjr10@psu.edu  
Website: www.pahomeenergy.org

## **Pennsylvania should continue funding energy-saving home improvements**

The current Pennsylvania budget does not include funding for a key program that has helped thousands of moderate-income homeowners make critical improvements to save energy.

Over 10,000 state homeowners have used Keystone HELP ([www.keystonehelp.com](http://www.keystonehelp.com)), the state's innovative low-rate loan and rebate program, to make energy-saving improvements to their home such as Energy Star rated heating, cooling, insulation and "whole house" energy makeovers, saving thousands of dollars on their energy bills. And over 1,400 independent Pennsylvania businesses have become approved Keystone HELP contractors, relying on the program to offer their customers an affordable way to pay for needed energy efficiency improvements.

Because the current budget does not include funding for this program, rebates have been suspended and low-rate loans may be available only for a few more months. The Alternative Energy Investment Act, which the General Assembly passed only last year, called for eight years of funding for energy conservation efforts such as Keystone HELP.

At a time of constrained credit, a tough economy and rising energy costs, it is imperative that the Legislature ensure there is continued funding for this cost effective and efficient program that not only helps families save money and energy but also provides Pennsylvania contractors with a vital tool to make these improvements economically affordable.

Recent consumer demand for Keystone HELP has been overwhelming. In just the first four months of the expanded program, over 6,500 applications for loans and rebates have been processed, with the value of funded and pending projects exceeding \$20 million.

The program has also been a boon to Pennsylvania contractors with more than 700 participating in advanced training courses on building science and home energy performance within a 12-week period. This training supports the national trend of improving a home's total energy efficiency through the Home Performance with Energy Star program as supported by organizations such as PA Home Energy.

Pennsylvanians should be proud that Keystone HELP is considered one of the most successful state energy efficiency programs in the nation and has been cited by Energy Star, the U.S. Department of Energy and many other groups as the model of how a state program should work -- a true public-private partnership that leverages state money into millions of dollars in private investment. Over \$40 million in improvements have been made since the program was developed in 2005 by the West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund and the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, administered by AFC First, a Pennsylvania energy efficiency lender. With the additional support of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, Department of Environmental Protection and the Alternative Energy Investment Act, Keystone HELP's loans and rebates have provided a critical option for Pennsylvania consumers looking to reduce their monthly utility bills and save energy.

Keystone HELP is a vital piece of Pennsylvania's energy independence strategy and its continued support by the state is critical. Contact your state representative, state senator or the governor's office immediately to let them know how Keystone HELP helps not only consumers save money and energy but also businesses grow their bottom line and maintain jobs, contributing to Pennsylvania prosperity.

Peter Krajsa is chairman and CEO of AFC First Financial Corporation. Joel Morrison is executive director of PA Home Energy.

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