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From Page:
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33-21 'Next bold actions' proposed for energy future

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DES MOINES — State officials' 2011 energy independence plan places a heavy emphasis on biofuels, pushes for more wind generation and promotes the concept of businesses using "work hubs" to reduce vehicle travel miles.

The annual plan issued by the state Office of Energy Independence was released Wednesday. It contains 18 recommendations relating to energy efficiency, renewable energy and biofuels that represent "the next bold actions" to chart the course for Iowa's energy future.

It notes that Iowa leads the nation in biofuels output by producing 30 percent of U.S. ethanol and 15 percent of biodiesel. Biofuels output adds nearly \$12 billion to Iowa's gross state product and generates \$576 million in state tax revenue annually, according to the report.

Also included in the report is a statement from Gov. Chet Culver and Lt. Gov. Patty Judge that Iowa's commitment and collaboration in moving

the state's energy industry forward "has created an energy 'buzz' sparking local and national attention." They also say the Iowa Power Fund has played a critical role in helping to achieve the state's vision of energy independence.

However, Iowa Republicans, who emerged victorious in the Nov. 2 election, have indicated the Power Fund's days are likely numbered and the Office of Energy Independence might be on the chopping block. The new 60-member GOP majority in the Iowa House is looking to shrink state government and cut spending.

Among the targets outlined in the energy independence plans are several goals to be met by 2025: decrease vehicle miles traveled in Iowa by 10 percent; increase wind generation in Iowa to 10,000 megawatts or more; and increase use of biofuels in Iowa and nationally by 50 percent.

The plan calls for Iowa employers and individuals to embrace a "work hub" concept that would cut down on commuting by using alternative work practices and locations — homes, an Iowa Communica-

tion Network center, wireless hot spots or other places — equipped with appropriate telecommunications technology to provide an environment for normal business activities.

"By introducing Iowans to the concept of 'work hubs,' the total amount of miles traveled will be reduced, the amount of carbon dioxide released into the environment is reduced and individuals will have more time and money to spend in their communities," the report said.

The plan calls for dramatically increasing the availability of biofuels. Suggested tactics include increasing the use of E15 and E85 ethanol-blended fuels by supporting the installation of blender pumps at retail locations in high-intensity traffic areas in Iowa; conducting more consumer education about purchasing flex-fuel vehicles; and supporting the use of higher blends of biodiesel.

The full report is available at www.energy.iowa.gov.

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