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### Energy On Voters' Minds In Six Communities

Tuesday, 03/01/11 5:50pm and Wednesday, 03/02/11 7:50am

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John Dillon



VPR/John Dillon

Residents of East Montpelier vote at their town meeting.

(Host) Saving energy was on the minds of Town Meeting day voters Tuesday in at least six towns around the state.

The communities debated whether to allow homeowners to pay for energy upgrades through their property tax bills instead of with a bank loan.

As VPR's John Dillon reports, at least five towns took this initial step to help residents cut their heating or electricity bills.

(Dillon) In East Montpelier, resident Carl Etnier told voters that while energy retrofits can be expensive in the short run, they give substantial benefits over time.

(Etnier) "You get free energy from the sun if you put in a solar hot water system but you got to put in a fair amount up front, far more than you would in a year or two or three of energy bills."

(Dillon) Etnier explained that if voters created a special town wide energy district, homeowners could cut the cost of the projects by financing them through their tax bills. Interest rates would be lower than what a bank would charge, he said.

(Etnier) "The people who participate pay their own freight. Somebody who doesn't participate doesn't pay anything."

(Dillon) East Montpelier resident Tony Klein is a state representative who chairs the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee. He says the energy districts should allow many more people to weatherize their homes - since the costs could be spread out over 20 years.

(Klein) "We have currently 80,000 structures in the state of Vermont that are deficient when it comes to weatherization. And through our weatherization program which is really targeted to low income Vermonters we knock off about 1,200 structures a month so we're not making a big impact on the backlog. And that's a lot of lost energy and a lot of lost energy dollars that don't need to be spent that way."

(Dillon) Around the country, the town-based energy programs are known as PACE - for Property Assessed Energy Districts.

Peter Admacyk is with the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, and has advised towns on the program.

He said another unique feature of municipal role in energy financing is that the town assessment goes with the property, and doesn't need to be paid off when the property is sold.

(Admacyk) Many people are reluctant to spend that up-front money because they're concerned that they might not own the property years in the future when they have paid themselves back and they're getting the full benefit of the investments. So PACE addresses that by allowing you to pay as you go.

(Moderator) All those in favor? Aye!

(Dillon) The measure passed overwhelmingly in East Montpelier. Voters in Waitsfield, Cornwall, Marlboro, Thetford, and Albany also supported creating the townwide districts to help residents finance energy projects. Organizers said a similar measure failed in Underhill.

For VPR News, I'm John Dillon in Montpelier.

**Visit VPR's Town Meeting Day page for full coverage**

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### AARP Launches Campaign For Ratepayer Refund

Wednesday, 01/18/12 7:37am

A consumer organization representing older Vermonters is launching a media campaign that demands a refund for ratepayers if the state's largest utility is sold. AARP-Vermont says its goal is to win back money it says consumers are owed for bailing out the utility a decade ago.

### Northfield Reinstates Permit Fees

Wednesday, 01/18/12 7:04am

### Bellevance Sentenced To 3 1/2 Years For Embezzlement

Wednesday, 01/18/12 6:06am

### Wind Brings Scattered Power Outages

Wednesday, 01/18/12 6:06am

## NPR News

### Reports: Obama Will Reject Keystone Pipeline Proposal

Wednesday, 01/18/12 12:06pm

It will, however, let TransCanada resubmit a proposal that moves the pipeline away from the environmentally sensitive Sandhills area of Nebraska.

### Homeless Teen Who's Up For Science Prize To Be At State Of The Union

Wednesday, 01/18/12 11:35am

### Virtual Virtuals: A Gamer Turns Video Game Food Into Real Food

Wednesday, 01/18/12 11:06am

### Federal Authorities Charge 7 In Insider Trading Case

Wednesday, 01/18/12 10:11am



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