

## Gov. Ritter Signs "Renewables For Schools" Bill

by Neshama Abraham

LAKEWOOD, CO; Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. was enthusiastically greeted by a packed auditorium of children and teachers at Foothills Elementary School in Lakewood where the Governor recently signed a new energy bill which will make it easier for schools to get loans for renewable energy projects.

Nicknamed "Renewables for Schools," bill 1312 creates a loan program to help schools install solar, wind, and ground source heat pumps for heating and lighting school buildings. The new law will help lower school's utility bills allowing the savings to go to the classroom, while reducing green house gas emissions at the same time. In addition, the bill will make it easier for schools to purchase electric and hybrid school buses.

"Schools all across Colorado spend more money on their utility bills than on computers or books combined," said Governor Ritter during the May 15th bill signing at Foothills Elementary.



### New Solar & Energy Efficient Partnerships

As Governor Ritter's Green Energy Economy takes hold in Colorado, a new trend is emerging where local companies work together to create total energy packages. These new partnerships combine energy-efficiency upgrades to the buildings with renewable energy installations.

The Foothills Elementary School provides a successful case in point. Long Energy Solutions, an Englewood-based energy service company, provided a total building retrofit including energy efficient technologies for the lighting, heating, and cooling systems, and upgrading a portion of the school's architecture.

Long then partnered with SolSource Inc., a solar energy design and engineering firm based in Denver. SolSource installed 44 Sharp PV panels on the school roof. The solar array can produce 13,680 kilowatt hours of energy from the sun per year and can prevent 24,898 pounds of CO2 emissions annually from entering our atmosphere.

The SolSource/Long Energy partnership has successfully lowered the carbon footprint of a number of other schools in the state. Long first "optimizes" the building for energy efficiency then SolSource designs and installs solar arrays mounted on the building rooftops to capture energy from the sun. A similar team approach was successfully applied at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley last Autumn.

Long has also improved the energy efficiency at Horizon High School in Thornton and a series of buildings at the University of Colorado at Boulder campus. SolSource has installed PV panels on 12 schools in Colorado that can produce 53kW of energy equal to 75,000 kilowatt hours annually and an annual carbon capture of 152,000 lbs of CO2.

"We support the kind of teamwork employed by Long Energy Solutions and SolSource Inc.," says Todd Hartman, Media Relations Manager for the Governor's Energy Office. According to Hartman, 70 school districts in the state are engaged in performance contracting, where schools pay for the energy efficiency upgrades through the savings gained on utility costs. These projects represent more than \$76 million worth of improvements to schools.

With the Governor's new energy bill now law, more schools can lower their carbon footprint. In the next few years, renewable energy may likely become part of school's curriculum both, enriching children's minds about the technology, and teaching them about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As one elementary school principal said, once children learn how renewable energy can warm and light their school, they will take these lessons from the classroom out into the world.

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