

Up All Night Performance Festival at EIU beginning September 18

Join us for a night of student-created performance! Past performances have included songs, skits, scenes, monologues, poetry, and dance. All of the work will be prepared over 30 hours leading up to the free public performance on September 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the Doudna Fine Art Center's The Globe. Tickets are free, so you don't want to miss these once in a lifetime performances!



EIU Wind Symphony and Concert Band are back September 17

The EIU Wind Symphony and Concert Band are back in action with full band rehearsals and indoor performances after the covid-year layoff! Join conductor, Dr. Alicia Neal and the Wind Symphony and Concert Band on Friday, September 17 at 7:30 p.m. in the Doudna Fine Art Center's Dvorak Concert Hall for the first full band concert of the 21-22 academic year. The audience will enjoy music by Percy Grainger, Vincent Persichetti, Alexandra Gardner,

Michael Colgrass, Jodie Blackshaw, and Thomas Root. Tickets are \$6.00 for general public/faculty/staff/senior & \$5.00 for students. Call the Doudna Fine Arts Center Box Office at 217-581-3110! The Box Office is open Tuesday - Thursday 11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Friday 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and one hour prior to every ticketed event. You can also visit www.doudnatix.com and purchase/print your tickets at home and skip the line altogether!

Horizon Health announces Life Center Open House on September 16

Learn about the many behavioral health services in Edgar County at an open house event Thursday, September 16, at the Life Center building on the Horizon Health campus.

The free event will take place from 4 to 6 pm. The Life Center is located at 745 East Court Street in Paris. Refresh-

ments, tours, and give-a-ways will be available.

The Life Center opened in June 2020. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, a public introduction was delayed. The addition of the Life Center creates a stronger presence of mental health services in the community. It brings together

Horizon Health's Senior Care program and the many services of Human Resources Center of Edgar and Clark Counties (HRC).

Note that masking and social distancing are observed at Horizon Health locations and events.

Annual Sew Happy Hearts Quilt Show Guild to be held September 24

Sew Happy Hearts Quilt Guild will be hosting their annual show at 641 W. 6th Street (former Neoga Elementary School). Show hours are Friday, September 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday, September 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Quilters who wish to show their quilts should bring them to the center on Wednesday, September 22 between 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Thursday, September 23 between 9 a.m.

to noon. Please be sure your quilts are clean and in good condition unless it's vintage. Forms to enter are available for download on the Sew Happy Hearts Facebook page. Forms will also be available at the venue. You will need to have the measurements of the quilt though we can measure here. There is no fee for entering a quilt.

Quilt show viewers will vote on their choice for a "Viewers Choice".

Admission to the show is \$3.

This year, raffle tickets are available for the Barn Quilt with sleeves PLUS tickets for a Basket Raffle filled with all sorts of goodies valued at \$700. You must attend the venue to purchase tickets for the Basket. In addition, there will be a Bazaar filled with all handmade items from guild members, a Sale Barn plus one Vendor.

Proceeds from the

show help with the club's charitable giving works. The guild has donated quilted and sewn items to various organizations including veteran's groups, homeless shelters, area children's homes and schools.

More information is available on the Sew Happy Hearts Facebook page or Sew Happy Hearts website: <https://sewhappyheartsneoga.wixsite.com/sewhappy>



House passes energy bill with labor, environmental groups on board

Measure heads to Senate which plans to return to Springfield Monday

By Jerry Nowicki
Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois House approved an energy regulation and decarbonization bill Thursday, a major step forward for a wide-ranging omnibus bill that had eluded lawmakers throughout the legislative session and the governor's three years in office.

The measure that aims to bring Illinois' energy generation sector to 100 percent carbon-free by 2050 and 50 percent renewable by 2040 will still need approval from the Senate, which planned to caucus Friday to discuss the measure, Senate Bill 2408, before a Monday return.

It passed the House 83-33 shortly before 9:30 p.m. Thursday. Gov. JB Pritzker quickly issued a news release saying he would sign it.

"This is what legislating is supposed to look like," House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, said in closing floor debate. "It's about good faith negotiating. It's about advocating for the interests in our districts back home. And it's about compromise in order to arrive at a product that benefits people in your districts, and ours."

Environmental groups extolled the decarbonization language, which aims to take coal, gas and other carbon-emitting power plants off the grid between 2030 and 2045, depending on the energy source and ownership structure.

Union groups praised the bill's language requiring that all major renewable construction projects must have project labor agreements in place to hire union labor, while non-residential projects, with few exceptions, would be required to pay a prevailing wage.

Republicans, meanwhile, warned of losses of downstate jobs, substantial consumer bill increases and potential grid reliability issues as fossil fuel plants are forced offline, although it passed on a bipartisan roll call.

Decarbonization,

renewables

Environmental and labor groups were in opposition on the issue of municipal coal-fired power plants coming into Thursday. Two plants that were at issue include Springfield's City, Water, Light and Power, and a plant funded by several municipalities in Illinois that is located in Marissa in the Metro East Area, called the Prairie State Energy Campus.

The final language requires the plants to be carbon-free by 2045, either by going offline or installing sequestration technology. By 2035, municipal plants must cut emissions by 45 percent. If a plant doesn't meet that goal by the end of 2035, the power plant will have until June 30, 2038 to either retire a portion of carbon-emitting units or meet the decarbonization goal some other way.

The bill also provides more than \$600 million over five years to three nuclear plants owned by Exelon Corporation - in Byron, Dresden and Braidwood. The company has stated it will not refuel the Byron plant after Monday, and it would begin decommissioning at that time, unless the General Assembly passed legislation to ensure its financial viability.

All told, negotiators believe the new bill is expected to raise residential electric bills by about 3-4 percent, commercial bills by about 5-6 percent, and industrial bills by about 7-8 percent, although the rollout for the various programs would be staggered over time and increases would vary by year.

The ratepayer money will fund equity programs for the clean energy workforce and new investment in renewable energy, among other initiatives.

It would also incentivize the transition of coal plants to solar facilities or battery storage sites, and it permits downstate utility Ameren to establish two utility-scale solar plants.

In a late addition to the bill, the city of Zion in Lake County, which is the site of a closed nuclear plant, would

be eligible for grants "in proportional shares of \$15 per kilogram of spent nuclear fuel stored at such a facility," according to the bill.

The charge on a customer bill for renewables would increase over time from about 2 percent to 4 percent, a \$360 million annual increase to fund projects such as wind and solar.

That investment is an effort to increase the portion of the state's energy contributed by renewables, which is currently between 7 and 8 percent. Nuclear made up about 58 percent of the state's electricity generation in 2020, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Downstate Republican lawmakers raised concerns that the portion of the state south of Interstate-80, on the MISO electric grid, is served by only one nuclear plant. The part of the state on the PJM grid, for the most part north of I-80, has the state's other five nuclear plants.

"You're not doing what you think you're doing with this bill," Rep. Tim Butler, R-Springfield, said in floor debate, warning that closing the Springfield and Marissa coal plants would make downstate reliant on out-of-state coal while putting central Illinoisans out of work.

Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Swansea, noted in a news conference after the bill's passage that it requires the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Commerce Commission and Illinois Power Agency to conduct a study at five-year intervals "to determine if there is grid reliability."

If there are not enough renewables and nuclear power available to keep the grid running, that means coal or gas plants could be kept online to meet peak demand.

"I think it's very legitimate," Hoffman said of grid reliability concerns. "And so we built that into the bill, though, there are reliability checkpoints every five years. That was very important to all of us because we want the lights to go on, we want the heating and air conditioning

to work."

Hoffman said representatives of Prairie State believe federal subsidies will be included in an infrastructure bill before Congress that will help fund carbon sequestration infrastructure at coal plants as well.

Republicans also expressed concerns about language allowing a private company, Invenergy, to invoke eminent domain, in seven counties for the purpose of a single transmission line, the Grain Belt Express direct current transmission line.

Equity, ethics, EVs

Included in the rate hike is \$180 million in annual funding for the newly-created Energy Transition Assistance Fund, which funds various workforce initiatives.

The bill directs the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to create the Clean Jobs Workforce Network program, which establishes 13 hubS in different communities across the state that rely on community-based organizations to provide job training and a career pipeline for equity-focused populations.

Other programs include a preapprenticeship program to prepare individuals for the renewable energy infrastructure workforce; and a contractor incubator to aid small clean energy businesses.

It also establishes a "Climate Bank" within the Illinois Finance Authority to help fund renewable projects, as well as a Jobs and Justice Fund, run by a nonprofit entity, aimed at ensuring "the benefits of the clean energy economy are equitably distributed." Another program aims to train individuals recently released from incarceration for careers in the renewable energy field.

Lawmakers also noted the bill tightens utility ethics laws by ending formulaic rate increases, strengthening economic disclosure requirements to include spouses employed by utilities, and creating Public Utility Ethics and Compliance Monitor to ensure utilities comply with existing and new laws.

It will also require the Illinois Commerce Commission to investigate whether ComEd misused ratepayer funds in connection to an on-

going federal investigation of the company's Springfield influence, and if it is found that they did, the money must be returned to ratepayers.

The bill also sets a goal of putting 1 million electric vehicles on Illinois roads by 2030, aiming to do so through incentives, such as offering rebates on the installation of charging infrastructure in certain communities, provided prevailing wage is paid on the construction labor.

It also creates a Displaced Energy Worker Bill of Rights, requiring the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to give advance notice of power plant or coal mine closures and to notify workers of available assistance programs.

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