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## Owens vetoes energy bills

### Plans to boost energy efficiency, information scuttled

By Todd Neff, Camera Staff Writer  
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Two energy bills with backers in Boulder were among the 12 bills vetoed by Gov. Bill Owens last week.

The first, House Bill 1147 sponsored by Rep. Tom Plant, D-Nederland, and written by Boulder's Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, would have instituted programs to boost natural gas-related energy efficiency use in the face of rising prices for the commodity. The second, Senate Bill 1317, would have created an annual Colorado Energy Profile with \$316,000 in state startup money.

The natural gas energy efficiency bill required utilities such as Xcel Energy to spend at least a half percent of their natural gas revenues on energy efficiency programs. Xcel has a similar program in Colorado for electric customers. Natural gas efficiency programs often include rebates for better home insulation, more efficient windows, hot water heaters and furnaces.

Howard Geller, the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project's executive director who wrote the legislation, said Xcel and natural gas pipeline operator Kinder Morgan Inc. backed it. It passed the House, 37-26, and the Senate, 28-6.

Geller said between 15 and 20 states have such programs, including Minnesota, where Xcel Energy runs one. Geller estimated the reduced gas consumption would save Colorado customers \$500 million over 10 years. "It's disappointing that Gov. Owens would not get behind a policy for helping consumers and businesses conserve energy," Geller said.

In his June 2 veto letter, Owens said he rejected the bill because it would cost residential customers \$6 and business customers \$22 each year. He wrote that wealthier customers would be able to qualify for rebates, leaving needy ones with higher utility costs. "Creating a new program that serves only a fraction of our state's citizens while subsidizing utilities and more affluent customers at the expense of all consumers is counterproductive and unnecessary," Owens wrote.

"Obviously it's a disappointment," Plant said. "The underlying message I get from the governor in the veto is that we haven't been able to effectively communicate the savings that are associated with conservation — both to the environment and the pocketbook."

The Colorado Energy Profile, sponsored by House Majority Leader Alice Madden, D-Boulder, would have provided an annual report of fresh data on Colorado's current and projected energy supply, production, generation, transmission, distribution and consumption. CU's Energy and Environmental Security Initiative would have led the work from Boulder, and the Colorado School of Mines would have contributed.

Owens said in his veto letter said: "Much of this information, which I agree has value to the state, is already available." He said he had directed the state Office of Energy Management and Conservation to use private funds to solicit bids for a state Web site including such information.

CU law professor Lakshman Guruswamy, who led the CU initiative, said a simple Web site won't work because much of the information is in fact not available, particularly with respect to renewable energy.

"What he's wanting the money to be spent on is the production of a Web site, which anybody can create in three hours," Guruswamy said.

Guruswamy said he may seek private funding to go forward on the more comprehensive study.

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