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**Energy Policy in Utah**

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Beginning in the early 1980’s and through May 2005, a Utah Energy Office addressed the energy issues that arose in the state. In May, 2005 Senate Bill 199 restructured the functions within the Energy Office allocating responsibilities to other agencies and subsequently created the position of “Energy Policy Advisor” within the Governor’s Senior Staff.

Herein we track the development of the current Utah Energy Policy in a post Energy Office environment and identify recent and anticipated changes associated with the formation of a new policy within the legislative and executive branches. Specifically, the 2006 legislative session formed a new basis for the current policy and further developments continue up to the present time.

Provisions of S.B. 199 called for moving the Clean Fuels Vehicle program and fund from the Utah Department of Natural Resources (UDNR) where the Energy Office was located to the Department of Environmental Quality and moved authority for certain federally-related programs, including the Renewable Energy Tax Credit and the State Energy Program to the Utah Geological Survey (still within UDNR). The State Buildings Energy Efficiency Program (SBEEP) was moved to the Division of Facilities Construction and Management to better align energy improvements and design with capital budgets.

Although the former Energy Office did provide assessments of energy issues in the state, no specific policy function existed within the office. It was apparent to both legislative and executive participants that a need existed to coordinate and form energy policy, and that creation of a central point of authority and responsibility was necessary for effective and functional policy implementation. This focus was captured in the creation of an “Energy Policy Advisor” within the Governor’s Office with an emphasis on policy formation and coordination within the state.

The new view of energy policy aligned with newly-standing Governor Jon M. Huntsman’s economic policy on resource development as an important historical and future component to growth of the state’s economy. As an aid to development and refinement of that policy, the Governor appointed an Energy Advisory Council to assist in his efforts and to work in coordination with the Energy Policy Advisor. The council drew expertise from industry, government, academia, legislators, and an interested citizenry. This council was formed prior to the appointment of an Energy Policy Advisor and assisted the governor in choosing the individual for this position.

The Council’s role to help and address energy issues, support balanced energy development, identify options for further economic growth in the energy sector, and advise on policy parameters opportunities and guided a wise use policy in the development of energy resources. As a member of the Governor’s senior staff, the Advisor’s function would be partly to closely confer with other staff members and their agencies, coordinate on regional and national issues, and work on creating a comprehensive energy policy. There were seven top energy priorities for the Advisor to address: energy efficiency, renewable energy projects, coal, oil shale and tar sands, natural gas, oil, and interstate and intrastate transmission.

Just prior to the 2006 Utah Legislative Session a need for a coordinated energy policy had also permeated both houses of the Utah legislature. A bipartisan and multi committee effort started.
The effort began early enough in the interim period between the 2005 and 2006 sessions that a bill became supported by both the Public Utilities and Technology and the Natural Resources Agriculture and Environment Joint Interim Committees. To assist in drafting and development of any legislation the joint interim committees asked citizen groups and experienced individuals to engage in discussion in one or more of four task groups which included:

1. Energy Efficiency
2. Transmission and Transportation,
3. Renewable Energy Resources, and

The resultant bill became House Bill 46 and it enjoyed wide support as the 2006 session ensued. The policy coordination aspects of the bill, its reporting requirements back to the legislature, and its codifying the position of Energy Advisor seemed to be in accord with all parties involved. However, several of its provisions were in contention and required resolution prior to passage.

The bill’s aspects in need of discussion and amendment prior to passage were the status of the Energy Advisor to the Governor and the need for including the studying nuclear power as a segment of the state’s energy supply. The former issue began as a provision for the Advisor to be a member of the Governor’s Cabinet. The executive branch however saw a need to have the advisor be a senior staff member, thus affording more flexibility and independence to the individual in the position. The latter issue, the study of nuclear energy as an energy source, became a matter of principle. Since the governor has long maintained a position of not supporting nuclear waste storage in the state support became a difficult prospect. Ultimately, its inclusion was agreed to as a part of the bill mostly, it seemed, to round out the bill for an all-inclusive look at energy development.

The bill gave the state a beginning look at its energy policy amidst an energy bright future that involves supplying, transporting and using energy products. It also begins an energy efficiency regimen for new and old State owned buildings. The new policy defines the parameters for further use and realization of its energy future. Efforts are now under way to examine policy adjustments through additional legislation in the 2007 Legislative Session through the efforts of the same joint interim committees.

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