

Energy Efficiency Standards

Issue Overview

Homes built following modern building energy codes are already energy efficient yet one of the more recent building energy codes (2021 IECC) contains requirements that have payback periods measuring in decades and in some cases over 100 years. As a result, mandating adherence to overly burdensome energy conservation requirements – particularly for new construction – adversely impacts housing affordability and disadvantages new homes. Likewise, it may not yield the intended results because most of the residential energy use is tied to the existing housing stock. Further, as prices rise and new homes become unattainable, potential home owners remain in older, less energy-efficient homes, which results in higher energy usage, higher emissions, increased likelihood of damage and lower standards of living.

For those consumers and builders who are interested in homes that offer features beyond the stringent recent code requirements, there are many government-administered and recognized above-code programs that encourage high-performance construction practices. These voluntary programs, which embrace consumer choice and provide market flexibility, have proven to be very successful in promoting and achieving improved efficiency and performance of the nation’s homes.

Solutions

- Support the ability of local jurisdictions to amend model building energy codes so they can address their specific geographic, economic and climactic needs, and to ensure compliance with the jurisdiction’s regulations.
- Repeal existing laws that either require or allow agencies to put programs in place that limit states’ options to amend and adopt codes.
- Revise the EPA ENERGY STAR for Homes program to remove the 2021 IECC insulation backstops in favor of the insulation levels of the 2024 IECC, remove the prevailing wage requirements, and add the National Green Building Standard as a compliance option for qualifying for the 45L tax credit.
- Revise the DOE Zero Energy Ready Homes program to improve design flexibility, remove the 2021 IECC insulation backstops in favor of the insulation levels of the 2024 IECC, and remove the prevailing wage requirements.
- Provide incentives such as tax credits, grants, insurance discounts, interest rate reductions, and increased property valuations to encourage more home owners to invest in energy efficiency.
- Preserve and expand DOE and EPA voluntary sustainability programs, such as ENERGY STAR, WaterSense, and Indoor AirPlus.