

Energy Efficiency Road Show

by Darrill Holly

The 18 foot-long series of panels was hauled to the nation's capital from Illinois for a July 21 briefing.

Co-op officials gave policymakers an opportunity to experience the same energy-efficiency messages more than 300,000 co-op consumer-members in the nation's heartland have been able to share during the past year.

"We use the wall to show people practical ways they can improve their homes to save energy," said Aaron Ridenour, director of economic development for Prairie Power. The Jacksonville, Ill.-based G&T joined its 10 distribution co-ops insponsoring the nearly 1,700 mile-road trip.

The wall provides an interior view of a typical home before sheetrock is nailed to the studs. Various types of insulation let viewers see the cost savings possible when walls are effectively sealed to reduce air flow and block radiant heat transfer.

"We know we can reduce the energy costs on the vast majority of homes by 20 to 40 percent," said Bob Dickey, manager of marketing and economic development for Paxton, Ill.-based Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative. Dickey conducted half-hour energy-efficiency



Illinois co-op officials (from left) Kevin Bernson, Aaron Ridenour, James Coleman and Bob Dickey hosted an energy-efficiency clinic at the U.S. Capitol. (Photo By: Derrill Holly)

clinic with the help of officials from Shelby Electric Cooperative.

Compressed air flowing through the display was used to demonstrate potential energy losses that could easily be plugged with proper caulking, insulation and various sealants.

"Energy costs are going to continue to go up," said Dickey. "Many homes were built decades ago and they leak like sieves."

The co-ops were invited to the Capitol by Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., a co-sponsor of the Rural Energy Savings Program Act (S. 3102). The measure would enable co-ops, through the Rural Utilities

Service, to help members defray the upfront cost of efficiency improvements and potentially forestall some new generation.

"A lot of co-op consumer-members are spending so much on their energy bills that they don't have anything left to make the upgrades that would reduce their energy usage," said Dena G. Stoner, NRECA's vice president of government relations.

"Efficiency is the best alternative to building expensive new power plants," she said. "Congress needs to see that we need to take energy efficiency to generation-level scale."

