

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**  
**Office of Public Affairs**

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**Obama Administration Announces Major Steps Forward to Advance Energy  
Efficiency Efforts, Improve Access to Low-Cost Financing for States and  
Local Communities**

*Commitments by States, Local Governments, School Districts Total 300 Million Sq. Feet, Will  
Cut Energy Costs, Reduce Pollution and Create Jobs*

WASHINGTON – The Obama Administration today announced 36 new states, local governments, and school districts have joined President Obama’s Better Buildings Challenge. These new commitments total nearly 300 million square feet in job-creating building energy upgrades, equivalent to more than 130 Empire State Buildings.

In addition, new public tax guidance issued today by the Department of the Treasury will make it easier for state and local governments to access more than \$2 billion in existing low-cost financing to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects through Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECBs). QECBs provide state and local governments with access to low-cost financing to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

“Making our public buildings and schools more energy efficient is one of the easiest ways to save taxpayer dollars,” said Energy Secretary Steven Chu. “Our new partners joining the Better Buildings Challenge today are paving the way to long-term benefits in their communities. These projects will reduce energy costs for local governments, support jobs across a range of industries, and help build an American economy that lasts.”

The Challenge is part of the Better Buildings Initiative launched in February 2011 by President Obama to support job creation by catalyzing private sector investment in commercial and industrial building energy upgrades. The Initiative is spearheaded by former President Clinton and the President’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness with the goal of making America’s buildings 20 percent more efficient over the next decade, which will help reduce energy costs for American businesses by nearly \$40 billion. Last year, commercial buildings consumed roughly 20 percent of all the energy used by the U.S. economy. The first 14 Challenge partners were announced at the Clinton Global Initiative’s CGI America meeting last June. Today’s announcements bring the total number of public and private sector partners to more than 100, and add \$300 million in estimated investments in building energy upgrades to the nearly \$4 billion in public and private sector financial commitments that were announced in December 2011.

The Obama Administration is committed to helping local governments effectively leverage Federal financing tools to invest in job-creating energy efficiency projects across the country.

The new public tax guidance from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is aimed at providing greater clarity on program standards and promoting the potential utilization of QECBs. The effort is a part of the Obama Administration's overall commitment to comprehensive tax reform to modernize and strengthen our tax code. Based on available information, it is estimated that more than \$2 billion QECB authority remains available. Full text of the IRS Notice can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-12-44.pdf>

Today's announcement was made at the Energy Department's [Better Buildings Summit for State and Local Communities](#) in Denver, Colorado. The Summit brings together over 300 city, state and district government leaders to discuss best practices in portfolio-wide energy management, successful public-private collaboration, policy development, and financing opportunities to speed the deployment of energy-saving building upgrades.

To learn more about the Better Buildings Challenge and its partners, including more on the partners announced today, visit [Better Buildings Challenge website](#).

The following communities and school districts have now joined the Better Buildings Challenge:

#### **States**

Delaware  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
North Carolina

#### **Counties**

Hall County, Georgia  
Kitsap County, Washington  
New Castle County, Delaware  
Placer County, California  
Sonoma County, California  
Thurston County, Washington  
Will County, Illinois

#### **Cities and Towns**

Arvada, Colorado  
Beaverton, Oregon  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Columbia, Missouri  
East Hartford, Connecticut  
City of El Paso, Texas  
City of Fort Worth, Texas  
Town of Huntington, New York  
City of Knoxville, Tennessee  
City of Medford, Massachusetts  
Town of North Smithfield, Rhode Island

City of Omaha, Nebraska  
City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
City of Roanoke, Virginia  
City of Rochester, New York  
City of Santa Fe, New Mexico  
City of Toledo, Ohio with Toledo Port Authority  
City of West Palm Beach, Florida  
City of Worcester, Massachusetts

**School Districts**

Camas County, Washington School District  
District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, DC  
Dysart, Arizona Public Schools  
Fort Atkinson School District, Jefferson County, Wisconsin  
Mesa County Schools, Colorado  
Portland, Oregon Public Schools

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