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Massachusetts tops in nation

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Massachusetts has unseated California and taken the top slot in the nation in a scorecard ranking states on energy efficiency efforts.

New England states made a strong showing in the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy scorecard, with Vermont (5th), R.I. (7th) and Conn. (9th) also cracking the council's top 10. California topped the council's scorecard during its first four years of publication but slipped to second this year.

The 2008 law made energy efficiency programs competitive in the traditional energy supply market and required utilities to purchase all available energy efficiency improvements that cost less than it does to generate power. It also required utilities to offer rebates and incentives for customers to upgrade lighting, air conditioning and industrial equipment when incentives cost less than generating electricity using less efficient equipment.

Mass. is also part of a multi-state compact to reduce greenhouse gases from power plants, an initiative that has generated millions of dollars for energy efficiency investments.

Council officials said the scorecard shows states are making progress on energy efficiency efforts despite a sluggish economy, state budget difficulties and a failure by Congress to enact a comprehensive energy strategy.

In a statement, council director Steven Nadel called energy efficiency "America's abundant, untapped energy resource" and portrayed efficiency efforts as a goal Democrats and Republicans can support to cut energy costs, create new jobs and help the environment. Council officials said they expect high energy costs to keep the pressure on states to seek efficiency savings across residential, commercial, industrial and transportation sectors.

The scorecard estimated that across the states, total energy efficiency budgets for electricity and natural gas in 2010 equaled about \$5.5 billion, 29 states have adopted or made progress toward adoption of new energy-saving building codes for homes and commercial properties, and 24 states have set long-term option of the latest energy-saving building codes for homes and commercial properties - up from 20 in 2010 and 10 in 2009.

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