

MADISON POLICY DIGEST

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*Free Electricity? State Grants Aim to Point the Way

*Boys Behind in Graduation Rates

FREE ELECTRICITY? STATE GRANTS AIM TO POINT THE WAY

The Orlando Sentinel reports, "During this year's legislative session state Rep. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, sponsored a bill that created about \$2.5 million in grants for people who install solar-power units on their home or business."

Gonzalo Frias, a spokesman for Rep. Hukill commented, "Producing solar energy is getting free power, which means you are taking up less of the existing energy. That means there is more to go around, and costs go down."

The Sentinel also points out, "Bob Coleman, a spokesman for Florida Power & Light, said Florida has been slow to embrace solar power because of the initial costs and the fact that although the weather may be hot, the sun does not shine with the daily length and intensity that it does in other parts of the country such as the Mojave Desert or California.

"But Frias said Hukill's bill will drive down costs. The new state money, coupled with a federal tax rebate, could reduce by as much as 50 percent the cost to homeowners and business owners who want solar power, Frias said. The specifics are still being worked out, but after someone purchases a solar system, they could apply to the state Department of Environmental Protection for a rebate. Frias said solar-power units generally cost between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

"He said another benefit to the technology is that after a hurricane, those with solar power would be able to power their homes more quickly than others who must wait for the electrical company to repair downed power lines." For the complete story click here:

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/state/orl-solar1006jul10,0,6313439.story?coll=orl-news-headlines-state>

BOYS BEHIND IN GRADUATION RATES

The Heartland Institute took a look at a book report written by Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters. "A wide gender gap in high school graduation rates is most pronounced among minorities in large urban school districts, according to a report from the Manhattan Institute.

“Key findings from the report, which is based on figures from 2003, the most recent data available, include a national public high school graduation rate of 70 percent. New Jersey and South Carolina bookend the nation with 88 percent and 54 percent graduation rates, respectively. Insufficient data kept the District of Columbia and Hawaii from being included.

“ ‘The results are a useful reminder just how low the high school graduation rate is-- around 70 percent on average and about 50 percent for minorities,’ Winters noted. ‘The gender gap is also interesting, and we confirmed that it is particularly large for African-American and Hispanic students. It's certainly worth it to wonder why.’

“While the national graduation rate for white students is 78 percent, Greene and Winters found graduation rates for African-American students averaged 55 percent, and for Hispanics, 53 percent. Females are graduating at higher rates than their male counterparts. African-American students display the largest gender gap, at 11 percentage points.” For the complete article click here: <http://heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=19258>

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor any bread it has earned -- this is the sum of good government.” (Thomas Jefferson).

OPINION OF THE WEEK

“Finding Better Ways to Achieving Cleaner Air” by Joel Schwartz

“Air quality regulation is complicated. The Clean Air Act (CAA) is hundreds of pages long, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has written thousands of pages of compulsively detailed regulations to implement the CAA requirements, along with tens of thousands of pages of guidance documents explaining what the regulations mean.

“Under the law, states must develop compliance plans, laws, regulations, and permitting systems to implement the federal requirements. Businesses must obtain permits that often specify operating conditions and pollution control methods unit by unit and process by process, and that must be amended any time a production process is changed. These permits can run to more than a thousand pages for a large industrial facility.

“Legions of lawyers and consultants help businesses figure out what the rules mean and how to comply with them.

“The vast majority of this activity has nothing to do with improving air quality, but instead involves creating and then demonstrating compliance with administrative requirements.

“There is no greater testament to the process-focused nature of federal air pollution law than the Clean Air Act's penalty system. States can suffer serious sanctions, such as loss of federal highway funds, for failing to submit an acceptable CAA compliance plan. But no such sanctions can be imposed for failing to attain the actual air pollution standards.”

For the complete article click here: <http://heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=19329>

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