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Illinois Commerce Commission Supports New Smart Thermostat Initiative

Homeowners across Northern Illinois are now eligible for rebates on smart thermostats that can cut the cost of the devices in half, making the convenience and increased control of energy use more affordable.

The smart thermostat initiative, a partnership between the Environmental Law & Policy Center, ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and CUB, with the support of the Illinois Commerce Commission, is the largest effort of its kind in the nation.

The program makes the ecobee3 and Nest Learning Thermostat, which retail for \$249, eligible for \$120 in rebates for customers with Wi-Fi, central air, and a furnace. Given the average customer savings estimate of \$130 per year, the rebates provide a good return on investment and a total estimated annual savings of \$80-120 billion dollars for Northern Illinois consumers.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi-enabled devices that allow residents to easily control the heating and air conditioning settings in a home through their smartphones, tablets, and computers. The technology is “smart” because it learns or adapts to user behavior over time and can generate energy savings automatically. Residents remain comfortable when home and reduce wasted money on heating and cooling energy while away at work or on vacation.

Illinois Commerce Commission Chairman Brien J. Sheahan applauded the public-private partnership that led to the groundbreaking initiative at a press conference Thursday where the program was announced.

“I am proud that a public-private partnership is embracing the opportunities that come with being technology enablers. Innovation in energy-efficient products creates enormous opportunities for cost-effective energy savings,” Sheahan said. “One of the Illinois Commerce Commission’s primary responsibilities is to determine the rates energy companies can set for consumers. We have strong standards requiring that ratepayer dollars only be used for energy efficiency programs if those programs deliver real savings to customers. The smart thermostat initiative meets the test because smart thermostats work. As smart thermostats increasingly come online through this initiative, it will not only help our state achieve its energy efficiency goals, but customers will save money and everyone will benefit.”

Chairman Sheahan was joined by ComEd President and CEO Anne Pramaggiore, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, officials from Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas,

the Environmental Law & Policy Center and Citizens Utility Board, and executives from smart thermostat manufacturers ecobee and Nest Labs.

The coalition set a target to install one million smart thermostats across the ComEd, North Shore Gas and Peoples Gas territory over the next five years.

Details as to how a customer can redeem the rebates, as well as options for installing the thermostats, which include self-installation, contractor-installation or installation by the utility, can be found on the ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas or North Shore Gas websites in the “Rebates” section.

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About the Illinois Commerce Commission

The Illinois Commerce Commission’s mission is to pursue an appropriate balance between the interests of consumers and existing and emerging service providers to ensure the provision of adequate, efficient, reliable, safe and least-cost public utility services. The Commission pursues this mission through three bureaus: the Consumer Services Bureau provides educational information on utility issues, resolves customer/utility disputes and develops rules on utility service and consumer protection; the Public Utility Bureau focuses on financial and operational analysis, policy development, public safety and enforcement activities related to electric, natural gas, water, sewer and telecommunications companies; the Transportation Bureau includes trucking insurance and registration, railroad safety, relocation towing, safety towing and household goods moving company enforcement activities. The ICC’s five commissioners are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Illinois State Senate for five-year terms.