

## Fort Collins at forefront of energy conservation study



Written by

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A new study released Monday by Gov. John Hickenlooper and based in part on Fort Collins residents' utility bills says consumers nationwide could save \$3 billion annually by voluntarily cutting their electric use.

Hickenlooper visited Fort Collins Monday to release the study at CSU's Engines and Energy Conversion Lab, and to sign into law a bill aimed at increasing private investment in research, development and the manufacturing of new technologies.

The study analyzed data gathered from 11 utilities in six states, including Fort Collins, covering about 750,000 households. The study looked at what happened when the utilities began giving consumers more detailed information about how much energy they use, and also how they compared to their neighbors.

The study by the Environmental Defense Fund concluded that consumers used 1 percent to 3 percent less electricity when

they were given that information. Fort Collins residents have saved a collective \$600,000 since the city's municipal electric utility began providing that comparative information to consumers in November 2009, the study said.

"They gave the context," Hickenlooper said of the utilities' informational campaigns. "They put the consumers in the driver's seat."

In 2008, then-Denver Mayor Hickenlooper announced a plan called Cool Biz in which city employees in the summer were encouraged to wear cooler clothing and skip ties and suit jackets, so they could use less air conditioning. Under the plan, the summer temperatures in seven Denver city buildings were raised by four degrees, ultimately avoiding \$29,500 in utility costs, according to the program's sponsors.

Joining Hickenlooper at the Colorado State University lab was former Gov. Bill Ritter and CSU President Tony Frank. Both Ritter

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and Frank lauded Northern Colorado's efforts to foster the "New Energy Economy" by finding innovative solutions to imported fossil fuels through public-private partnerships.

Ritter is now director of the CSU-based Center for the New Energy Economy and a senior scholar within CSU's School of Global Environmental Sustainability.

The law signed by Hickenlooper extends a pilot program that fostered 21 new businesses around the state. Rep. John Kefalas (D-Fort Collins), who sponsored the pilot program and the extension, said every \$1 spent on the program as tax credits returns \$10 in subsequent private investment.

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