

October 5, 2009

Bill will Provide Grants for Clean Energy Workforce Training and Education at Community Colleges

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján announced the introduction of the Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 at the Santa Fe Community College where he was joined by school officials. The Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 will support the training of technicians to work in the wind, solar, geothermal and biomass energy sectors. The bill also will cover other energy-related occupations, including energy-efficient construction and retrofitting, recycling and waste reduction, water and energy conservation, and sustainable agriculture. The legislation currently has 22 cosponsors.

“It is critically important that we train our workforce to participate in a clean energy economy,” said Rep. Luján. “The Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 will give community colleges and students the opportunity to lead in a clean energy economy and grow a skilled workforce that can help make the United States a leader in clean energy production.”

“We at Santa Fe Community College are so pleased that Congressman Luján is introducing this legislation, which recognizes the important role community colleges play in the new energy economy,” said Dr. Sheila Ortego, President of Santa Fe Community College. “On our campus, we have experienced a doubling of enrollment in programs such as solar energy, water conservation, green building and biofuels this fall. This bill will help meet the need of students and industry going forward, as we construct our new Sustainable Technologies Center beginning this fall.”

Officials at Mesalands Community College and Central New Mexico Community College also expressed support of the legislation.

“The Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 is not only an investment in community colleges and our students, it is a critical down payment on the kind of green economy that will spur widespread economic growth and create new and long lasting career opportunities,” said Diane Burke, dean of the School of Applied Technologies at Central New Mexico Community College. “This legislation will empower community colleges to quickly respond to the fast-moving needs of emerging green industries and train students to become technicians with unlimited growth potential.”

“The North American Wind Research and Training Center at Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari, New Mexico is pleased to support Congressman Luján’s vision for the creation of the legislation to train citizens in renewable energy occupations for the new ‘green economy’,” said Dr. Phillip Barry, President of Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari. “There is a critical need to train citizens for the emerging ‘green economy.’ Congressman Luján should be commended for his vision for a new America that will be more self sufficient as it relates to energy. The community colleges of America are strategically located and poised to meet the energy training needs for the emerging green economy. Congressman Luján should be commended for his vision and initiative in the introduction of this legislation that can assist

America in developing a work force that can reduce America's dependence on foreign oil."

The Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 will establish grants to community colleges to be jointly awarded by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Energy for training in these various fields.

Fifty percent of the annual \$100 million authorization will be used to create community college programs that focus on the inherent renewable resource industries in a given region. This will allow students to train in the fields most likely to affect where they live. The other 50 percent will go to boost and upgrade existing programs throughout the country that are already providing this type of job-training and education.

"The Community College Energy Training Act of 2009 will allow even more students to be trained and community colleges to keep their training programs on the cutting edge of the renewable energy industry," said Rep. Luján. "Such investment in our community colleges is an integral component of preparing our workforce for a clean energy economy."