

## **Energy Efficiency at Home by Jaydee Hanson**

*A Testimony of Stewardship*

Since 2007, my wife and I have made our home much more energy efficient. When we first ran our energy use through the EPA Energy Star Yardstick our home was rated at 80%. This means that our energy use was less than 80% of people with homes our size and in our region

([https://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=HOME\\_ENERGY\\_YARDSTICK.showGetStarted](https://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=HOME_ENERGY_YARDSTICK.showGetStarted)). Every year our home's rating has gotten better bit-by-bit. It is now rated 92.5%. Surprisingly, we employed mostly simple cost effective measures. All of the light bulbs (except those under the kitchen cabinets and in appliances) are now on motion detector switches or are fluorescent. When we replaced a refrigerator, we got one with a high Energy Star rating. We replaced a leaky storm door and we reprogrammed the furnace/air conditioner thermostat to more accurately reflect when we were home.

Now we want to do even better. We can still add more insulation in the attic and walls. LED bulbs have come way down in price. And eventually we hope to install some solar panels. But we think we have started to do enough to say to our legislators that we are doing our part to voluntarily reduce our contribution to greenhouse gases. We would like the state and federal government to do more, too.

This year the Virginia General Assembly took a step that might help my family and my church afford solar sooner. The General Assembly passed a bill HB 2191/SB975 to allow individuals to donate to a loan fund for solar development in Virginia. Starting next July, your utility bill will have a new option allowing you to donate to the Voluntary Solar Resource Development Fund. Many of you may already be donating funds to help low income people pay for their energy bills, here is a chance to help Virginians afford to go solar with affordable loans.

Once the fund receives enough money, it will make loans to install photovoltaic devices, solar water heaters, and some solar space heating devices at homes, non-profits (including religious bodies), and businesses. So part of donations can help Virginia go solar. Even a modest donation each month will add up. You will be able to contribute as little as \$1 a month, but its important that the Commonwealth sees that a great many of us want to make solar more affordable. Rather than encouraging mountain top removal or offshore oil drilling, we would like Virginia to encourage more solar and renewable. Until the state catches up with us, let's show Virginia that we will put our money into this loan program. Then maybe the state will follow suit.