

Chris James, CT DEP

## Welcome and Introduction

Good morning, and welcome to Eastern Connecticut State University. We are happy to host what we anticipate to be a day of constructive and robust discussion focused on energy efficiency.

The setting here is appropriate for this discussion, as many of the buildings you see here have incorporated energy efficiency principles, and the University is the home of the Institute for Sustainable Energy.

In New England, we like to think of ourselves as first in many areas, and that is certainly true in our leadership in environmental and energy issues. Today's discussion also is the first regional activity associated with the implementation of the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency, a plan with considerable support from the US EPA and DOE and a diverse group of business, environmental and state agency representatives.

While we rightfully can claim leadership in many areas, we often fail to really see ourselves as a region. Too often, we lapse into town to town competition, with Connecticut's 169 towns or Massachusetts' 351 towns pulling us away from realizing our full regional potential. We sometimes get bogged down into minutia on whether one state or another can lift something, and instead of achieving progress with three, four or five states, we agree on the lowest common denominator and all six states suffer as a result. We often fail to punch above our weight.

Today, I am charging each of us to put aside, at least for today, that narrow focus, and begin to think about how we can realize our full regional potential. Our electric grid goes across all six states, and for purposes of today's discussion, I would challenge each of you to think in terms of us as one comprehensive region. Let's think creatively and I encourage you to move out of your comfort zone.

You are here representing your states and agencies since you are the ones who implement the important environmental and energy programs in each of our states. However, in order to carry forward, we need to engage our commissioners, to show them the importance of energy efficiency and that it is an issue that can bring considerable benefits to the region.

So, the challenge here today is to engage at a level that may be above where you're usually comfortable with, or are permitted to operate in. We want to get out of the weeds and into the air a bit, not necessarily at the 30,000 foot level, but maybe at 3,000 feet. High enough to see how the dots connect, but not so high that we lose the practical implementation aspects at which you are so good at recognizing.

To the extent that anything we discuss today will lead to and/or require changes in state policies, it goes without saying that we clearly acknowledge state sovereignty and the individual steps that may be needed to accomplish these goals and objectives.

My goal, my challenge to you today is to encourage you to participate fully using your state experience, to use that experience as a framework for our discussions today, and to think of the bigger picture, what can we accomplish as a region, and how that would benefit all of us. New England is home to 12 million people, it houses two of the states in the top five per capita income nationally, has the best education of any region in the country and is the most politically progressive. Let's harness that potential and work today on what we could build together to turn the region into the most energy efficient in the country, grow our economy to provide local jobs and achieve our goals to improve air quality and to stabilize the climate. Thank you for coming today and I look forward to an active and heady discussion.