Illinois Clean Jobs Bill: Provisions for Economically-Challenged Communities

The Illinois Clean Jobs Bill is the one energy bill that is designed to create jobs in every part of the state, and help consumers and families in virtually every community across the state.

The bill would make targeted investments in blighted brownfields, rooftop solar, new wind, community solar for people without rooftop access, and a robust solar program for moderate-to-low income families. It is intended to create revenues to invest in workforce development, low-income bill assistance and other priorities.

The Illinois Clean Jobs Bill would enable Illinois to meet standards called for by the U.S. EPA’s “Clean Power Plan,” which would reduce carbon released by power plants and improve public health.

It builds upon energy efficiency standards that have saved consumers more than $1 billion. For moderate-to-low income families, this provision can make all the difference between truly “affordable housing” and monthly housing costs that are simply unaffordable.

- **Moderate- to low-income solar program** (pg 23-27)
  - Goal: Overcome barriers to solar participation by the moderate-to-low income community.
  - About $250 million, using existing Renewable Energy Resources Fund funds
  - Solar for moderate-to-low income residents, and public buildings/nonprofits serving moderate-to-low income households (for example: schools, churches, affordable housing, etc).
  - Includes providing workforce development opportunities in the moderate-to-low income community, job training, and energy efficiency education.
    - Note: Low-income definition (80% of area median income, adjusted every 5 years) is consistent with eligibility for Illinois’ low-income EE programs.

- **Community Solar** (RPS)
  - Goal: provide solar access to renters and others without rooftop access.
  - Participants would receive same benefits of reduced energy bills as those customers that put solar directly on their roof.
  - Allows residents and businesses to turn properties in their community into clean energy plants.
For renewable energy & EE procurements: Provide employment opportunities for all segments of the population and workforce, including minority-owned and female-owned business enterprises; shall not discriminate based on race, gender or socioeconomic status.

Brownfield Solar (RPS)
- Turn blighted pieces of land into clean energy engines.
- RPS would specifically call for certain contaminated lands to be developed into solar farms. Much of this land is not suitable for reuse for other purposes, even if cleaned up or capped. Brownfields bring these pieces of property back into functional use, bring clean energy to the neighborhood, bring the land back on the tax roll, and provide new jobs.
- These brownfields are disproportionately in disadvantaged communities. Instead of leaving them dirty or unused, this bill would allow them to become clean energy hubs.

Energy efficiency (EE)
- Doubles budget for low-income EE (pg 97-98): Minimum of 12.5% of energy efficiency measures allocated to programs that serve moderate-to-low income residents.
  - Joint delivery (pg 98): Low-income EE projects can count both towards natural gas and electricity reduction goals (incentivizes home weatherization/retrofits).
  - On-bill financing (pg 230-232): Expands pilot for low-interest loans for EE projects; customers pay back the loan on their monthly utility bills.
  - TRC (pg 15): Test for “cost-effectiveness” revised to account for benefits of providing energy efficiency services to moderate-income and low-income customers. Helps ensure that moving forward, more investment is driven towards cost-effective EE projects that serve moderate-to-low income customers.

Potential investments from new auction program (pg 264-266)
- The bill provides Illinois lawmakers with a range of tools to help customers and the environment, including the option of a market mechanism to limit carbon pollution. This provision includes review of the impact on ratepayers and other stakeholders. If implemented, this market would create revenues to invest in clean energy, workforce development, low-income bill assistance, and other priorities.
- 65% of revenues for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects; of this, at least 20% designated for investments in low-to-moderate income communities and households, with preference given to Environmental Justice Communities.
  - IPA, in coordination with the IL Environmental Justice Commission and an inclusive stakeholder process, will develop list of EJ communities (low-to-moderate income and minority communities disproportionately impacted by power plant pollution).
- 5% of revenues for bill assistance (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program).
- 10% of revenues for power plant communities (public health and economic impacts).