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Reps. Zigmunt, Soletski and Senator Cowles Propose Legislation to Boost Economy, Create Green Collar Jobs in Wisconsin

Bill Would Provide Credits for Renewable Technology Like Orion's Apollo(r) Solar Light Pipe That Replaces Electric Lights During Peak Hours

MANITOWOC, Wis., Aug 3, 2009 (GlobeNewswire via COMTEX News Network) -- State Reps. Ted Zigmunt and James Soletski, along with Senator Robert Cowles on Monday introduced new legislation that would provide Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to users of direct use renewable energy technology like Orion Energy Systems' (Nasdaq:OESX) Apollo(r) Solar Light Pipe.

Supporters of the bill say the legislation will spur growth in Wisconsin's green jobs sector and improve the environment through a reduction in energy use and carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions.

"This bill will create jobs -- and lots of them," said Zigmunt, D-Francis Creek. "Not only for Orion Energy Systems, but for hundreds of Wisconsin construction workers, carpenters, roofers and electricians, who will work installing these systems in our state and throughout the country. This is a wide-reaching bill."

Joe Mrotek of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, Northern Wisconsin Regional Council also addressed the audience of about 100 people, saying the bill will create thousands of construction jobs installing Orion's light pipe technology. Orion is developing a training program for the carpenter's union designed to teach carpenters how to install the rooftop technology.

The proposed legislation was introduced at Orion Energy Systems' Manitowoc technology center, 2210 Woodland Drive. The approximately 30-minute event can be viewed on Orion's Web site at http://www.oriones.com/legislation_lrb2962_orion.html.

The bill is co-authored in the Senate by Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay; Jeff Plale, D-South Milwaukee; and Joe Liebham, R-Sheboygan; and in the Assembly by Soletski, D-Green Bay and Zigmunt. If passed, the bill will enable utilities to maximize their use of renewable energy and allow Wisconsin business and ratepayers to save significant amounts of money in energy costs.

Co-sponsors of the this legislation include: Sen. Randy Hopper (R-18); Sen. Alberta Darling (R-8); Sen. Jim Holperin (D-12); Sen. Dale Schultz (R-17); Sen. Dan Kapanke (R-32); Sen. Luther Olsen (R-14); Rep. Bob Ziegelbauer (D-25); Rep. Steve Kestell (R-27); Rep. Scott Gunderson (R-83); Majority Leader Tom Nelson (D-5); Rep. Tamara Grigsby (D-18); Rep. Nick Milroy (D-73); Rep. Terese Berceau (D-76); Rep. Robert Turner (D-61); Rep. Terry VanAkkeren (D-26); Rep. Josh Zepnick (D-9); Rep. Phil Montgomery (R-4); Rep. Kim Hixson (D-43).

The bill would include into Wisconsin's Renewable Portfolio Standard biogas, geothermal energy, and direct use solar energy including solar water heaters and Orion's Apollo(r) Solar Light Pipe. When used as an alternative to traditional power plant produced electricity, these alternative renewable sources can be used to fulfill a utility's renewable resource requirement.

The Apollo(r) Solar Light Pipe harvests daylight and directs it to a facility floor using no electricity for up to 10 hours a day, reducing a customer's light-related energy costs to zero and in turn significantly reducing demand on the electrical grid during peak hours.

"This will help this wonderful company employ more people," Cowles said about Orion. "I look forward to hearing that at some point in the future Orion added more jobs as a result of this legislation.

"I think we can use it as a tool to take an instate company that generated all of these jobs and generate even more jobs."

Soletski said the bill also will help Wisconsin work toward securing its position as an environmental steward.

"It's important that every new technology is utilized," Soletski said. "Orion's light pipe technology is not just an idea, or possible solution, it's a solution to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. It's a product made right here by Wisconsin workers that, when installed, makes a building much more energy efficient and much less reliant on the power grid."

Soletski said if Orion's solar light pipe reaches its potential in Wisconsin, the state could reduce 520 million kilowatt-hours each year, with a cost savings of \$41 million for Wisconsin businesses. The light pipe also can prevent 450,000 tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere annually.

"This is a great day for Orion, the state of Wisconsin and the environment," Orion CEO Neal Verfuert said. "The environment is everybody's business, and it's important to support this legislation and the legislators who have the vision to look to the future and do the right thing.

"Right now, we need real solutions to get out of this energy crisis if we want to stay competitive in the future. I think we can be comfortable knowing that this legislation will help create a lot of jobs, not only in Manitowoc, but also countless jobs for those who are needed to install this technology."

Orion's innovation and technology recently won the praise of President Barack Obama, who applauded Orion in a White House speech promoting clean energy, the creation of green collar jobs and the importance of energy efficiency. Obama challenged Orion and other clean energy companies to "mount a historic effort to end once and for all our dependence on foreign oil."

Other speakers at Monday's event included Manitowoc Mayor Justin Nickels, Two Rivers City Manager Greg Buckley and Orion's Vice President of Governmental Affairs Kevin Crawford.

Orion has deployed its energy management systems in 4,581 facilities across North America. Since 2001, Orion technology has displaced more than 435 megawatts, saving customers more than \$577 million and reducing indirect carbon dioxide emissions by 4.9 million tons. Orion's technology was recently internationally recognized with a Platts Global Energy Award for the single most innovative and sustainable green technology of 2008.

Orion Energy Systems Inc. (Nasdaq:OESX) is a leading power technology enterprise that designs, manufactures and implements energy management systems, consisting primarily of high-performance, energy-efficient lighting systems, controls and related services for commercial and industrial customers without compromising their quantity or quality of light. For more information, visit www.oesx.com.

The Orion Energy Systems, Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=4540>

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