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## **Rio Grande Valley Residents Join IRA Community Workshop to Tell Department of Energy To Support Renewables**

**Brownsville, TX** -- Yesterday, Rio Grande Valley community members, organizations, and politicians attended morning and evening workshops in Brownsville, Texas hosted by the Department of Energy (DOE). These DOE workshops - at which Sierra Club also [presented](#) - are listening sessions to share information on a myriad of environmental and clean energy programs that could help bring millions of dollars in investments to reduce electricity bills, expand green jobs, and make the Rio Grande Valley a leader in Texas' growing clean economy.

The U.S. Department of Energy visited the Edinburg, Alamo, and Brownsville areas to share energy/energy-efficiency funding, rebates, and tax credit opportunities available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and how the Justice40 Initiative (J40) will support the Rio Grande Valley. These funds have the potential to support energy efficiency upgrades, appliance rebates, community solar development, electrical grid infrastructure, and more. They are continuing their workshop tour in Corpus Christi today, April 14.

The Rio Grande Valley has been underserved in terms of renewable and affordable energy programs compared to other parts of Texas and the United States. These workshops offer Rio Grande Valley residents the chance to tell the DOE what they need and deserve out of renewable energy and efficiency programs, and continue to voice their opposition towards fossil fuel industry greenwashing schemes such as carbon capture and storage (CCS).

Rio Grande Valley communities oppose CCS because it is neither safe, affordable, or good for the environment. CCS technologies are extraordinarily costly to build and operate, and are not viable without a very high level of government subsidy. The amount of taxpayer money that would be paid towards CCS projects could purchase outright more than five times the amount of wind or solar generating capacity as would be provided by a fossil plant receiving the subsidy.

Government funds need to go towards real energy efficiency programs aimed to reduce cost burdens and reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. Since the 2021 winter storm blackouts - largely caused by the failure of natural gas plants - electricity bills have doubled around Texas. Texans - especially low and fixed income people - are having to choose between paying to keep the lights on or paying for groceries, medicine and other needs. Communities and allied organizations are urging municipal utilities like Brownsville PUB to diversify their energy portfolio to not be so dependent on expensive natural gas power plants.

Right now, the DOE has a real opportunity to improve the lives of Rio Grande Valley residents. Gas prices are driving up the cost of electricity due to a combination of LNG exports and the rising cost of global energy due to the war in Ukraine. But, clean energy initiatives like weatherization for homes and small businesses, wind power, utility scale solar, and community solar can make Texas' grid more resilient and provide low-cost reliable energy for our communities. They also create much-needed investments in clean energy businesses and opportunities for good paying jobs in the Valley.

***In response, Sierra Club Organizer Agripina Gomez released the following statement:***

“Energy burden, clean drinking water, and high electricity bills are a major concern for me and my neighbors, and I’m glad the Department of Energy is presenting these opportunities to our communities. We need those in office to apply for these grants and use the funds wisely to better our community. On top of worrying about the electric grid, I've gone to the extreme of not using my washer and dryer, covering my windows in foil, and not using the heater or air conditioner in an attempt to save energy. My electricity bill got as high as almost \$400 and is still really high compared to the previous years. Now I have to choose, do I pay the full amount of my bill, or ask for an extension so I can have leftover money to fix my aging appliances and buy groceries.”

***In response, Dr. Christopher Basaldú, Carrizo Comecrudo Tribal member, released the following statement:***

“Yesterday, the DOE presented to the community about resources for Tribal nations. The Carrizo Comecrudo Tribal Nation, the original people of Brownsville, are telling the DOE that Rio Grande LNG and their plans for a carbon capture storage facility do not help Native people. Rio Grande LNG and CCS would lead to even more destruction of sacred native lands and wildlife that we need to preserve our existence. The DOE should not be giving out subsidies for an unproven and untested technology to greenwash LNG's image.”

***In response, Brownsville community member Josette Hinojosa released the following statement:***

“Our community has been suffering from a drought for months, and now I’ve learned that a gas company that would pollute the Rio Grande Valley to process gas for export is planning to build a carbon capture project and suck up even more of our water. We need real solutions for our low-income community. We don’t want the Valley to be a testing site for this experimental carbon capture technology that puts us in an even worse situation.”

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