

## Lawmakers gunning for K-12 “Energy Literacy” program

As the nation’s largest producer of coal, and a workhorse supplier of natural gas, oil, uranium and wind energy, it makes sense that Wyoming’s K-12 students should have a basic understanding of the nation’s energy supply and consumption chain, and related social issues. A handful of Wyoming lawmakers say that’s the goal of an “Energy Literacy Education Program” under consideration with Wyoming’s [Joint Minerals, Business and Economic Development interim committee](#).



Screen-shot of "Petroville, OK" a student energy literacy program in Oklahoma.

According to proponents on the committee, Wyoming students — through existing media and education programs — may not be hearing the full details of often contentious issues related to energy development and the environment. That concern may explain the make up of the panel that the committee asked to perform the initial research; Lara Ryan, executive director of the non-profit [Wyoming Land Trust](#), Mindy Stitt, executive director of [Oklahoma Energy Resources Board](#), and Wendy Lowe, a longtime Wyoming lobbyist for Williams Cos. and other energy companies. None are professional Wyoming educators.

They appeared before the committee in Casper on September 12, 2011. Ryan testified that the underlying message of a K-12 energy literacy program should be clear: “Energy and conservation are not at odds. Rather, they are mutually beneficial. . . . We can have it all,” she testified to the committee.

Stitt said that Oklahoma’s [energy education program](#) includes pro-energy advertising (click [here for television commercials](#), click [here for a selection of print ads](#), or [here for a single ad](#)) in major media. She underscored the idea that any program has to be focused on training teachers how to educate students about energy.

Sen. Eli Bebout (R-Riverton) said he made an unsuccessful run at a similar energy literacy bill in 1999, and he has been a big fan of the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board program for many

years. Senate President Jim Anderson (R-Glenrock), who does not serve on the Joint Minerals committee, said he supported the concept of an energy literacy program in Wyoming.

“By golly, I think you’re on to something,” Anderson told committee members.

Lowe reminded committee members that there’s not exactly a vacuum of energy curricula in Wyoming schools. She said many Wyoming teachers have a good understanding of energy and Wyoming’s role, and there are some energy-specific programs throughout the education system.

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