The Sustainable DC Act of 2012

The nine subtitles that make up the Sustainable DC Act of 2012 support the Sustainable DC Plan to make the District of Columbia the healthiest, greenest, most livable city in the country by 2032. The Act contains legislation in three broad categories: economy, equity, and the environment.

LEADING THE WAY FOR GREEN BUSINESS
ACCESSING PRIVATE CAPITAL TO PROMOTE ENERGY EFFICIENCY
The “Energy Efficiency Financing Amendment Act of 2012” increases access to private capital in order to promote energy efficiency and related job creation. This amendment clarifies and refines the existing authority to allow roll-out of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) pilot program, a $30 million energy retrofit pilot backed by private capital and the first installment in achieving the $250 million program already authorized by the DC Council. The amendment also makes water and stormwater improvements eligible to be included in a PACE-financed project, enhances the types of savings that can be included when evaluating the return on a PACE-financed project, and allows for the direct assignment of the tax certificate in the event of a default.

ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL INCENTIVES ARE TAX-EXEMPT
The “Conservation and Protection of Natural Resources Incentive Clarification Amendment Act of 2012” exempts from computation as District gross taxable income incentives received through DDOE RiverSmart programs that encourage the conservation and protection of natural resources. Residents receiving DDOE green incentives need clarity that rebates, grants, subsidies, in-kind services, and other such incentives received for activities that conserve and protect natural resources are excluded from the computation of a taxpayer’s District gross income.

FULLY FUNDING THE ENERGY STAR BUILDING BENCHMARKING PROGRAM
The “Clean and Affordable Energy Benchmarking Amendment Act of 2012” will establish, as a fundable Clean and Affordable Energy Act (CAEA) program, the building benchmarking program required by the CAEA and now under development by DDOE. This program, one of the first of its type in the nation, requires disclosure of ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager scores for all private buildings over 50,000 square feet. The program will roll out in 2012, and includes extensive data management, enforcement, and industry education support.

PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATING SYSTEMS
The “Renewable Energy Incentive Program Amendment Act of 2012” allows DDOE to continue a successful program that has provided rebates to District residents and businesses for the installation of renewable energy generating systems in the District. The proposed program increases the use and awareness of renewable-energy-generation technologies by District residents, businesses and institutions, and contributes to environmental and economic benefits.

RESTORING THE ENVIRONMENT
PREVENTING FERTILIZER POLLUTION IN OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS
The “Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Fertilizer Amendment Act of 2012” will reduce the use of fertilizers that can pollute the District’s waterways, accelerating the growth of algae and damaging aquatic ecosystems, fisheries, and water quality. Algal blooms have a strong negative impact on fisheries, degrade fishing and boating activities, and harm tourism and property values. Controlling fertilizer use in general -- and especially by reducing phosphorous and nitrogen use in fertilizers—will greatly aid the District to meet federal Clean Water Act requirements.
PROMOTING URBAN AGRICULTURE THROUGH BEEKEEPING
The “Sustainable Urban Agriculture Apiiculture Act of 2012” promotes the raising of honeybees, which are beneficial to home garden vegetable and fruit production in the District. Beekeeping also produces economically valuable products including honey and beeswax. Currently honeybee hives are only permitted under very limited conditions, despite being allowed in equally dense cities such as New York City and Chicago (Chicago’s City Hall has beehives on its green roof). Bee programs also present unique learning opportunities for schoolchildren and the general public.

PROTECTING OUR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS
PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM TOXIC EXPOSURE
The “Child-occupied Facility Healthy Air Amendment Act of 2012” prohibits the proximate location of child-occupied facilities and dry-cleaning facilities that use perchloroethlyene or n-propyl bromide as a cleaning agent for clothes or other fabrics. The prohibition would extend through 2029, when perchloroethlyene will be outlawed in the District. The bill requires that owners of dry-cleaning facilities be educated about the dangers of perchloroethylene and n-propyl bromide, about their proper handling, and about less-toxic alternatives. The bill was drafted in response to an incident of serious PERC contamination next door to a District daycare center.

WEATHERIZATION FOR LOW-INCOME AND ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS
The “Low-Income Weatherization Plus Program Amendment Act of 2012” allows DDOE to restart a successful program that has provided essential weatherization services to low-income District residents for more than 30 years. The proposed program helps to reduce energy costs for low-income families, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and children, while ensuring their health and safety.

ENERGY SYSTEM RETROFITS FOR LOW-INCOME AND ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS
The “Heating System Repair, Replacement, or Tune-up Program Amendment Act of 2012” allows DDOE to restart a successful program to repair, replace, or tune up heating systems and hot water heaters in low-income households. The proposed program helps to reduce energy costs for low-income families, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and children, while ensuring their health and safety. Each year, DDOE receives hundreds of requests from District residents for services provided under the proposed program, which DDOE is currently unable to fulfill.