

Go Green, Pay More Green

✘ Earlier in the year, we received a letter from our City Manager and City Councilmember which included our “first personalized Home Energy Report.” The report compares our energy usage compared to our neighbors’.

Our “most” efficient neighbors are graphed in green, “all” neighbors are graphed in orange and we’re graphed in, oh my God! black! Yes, we spend 24% more electricity than our neighbors! We’re definitely horrible people. The only thing missing was the skull and crossbones insignia on the envelope to let our letter carrier know how despicable we really are.

I find this “big brother” mentality intrusive and truly disgusting.

When this program was initiated, our city government was teetering on bankruptcy so I’m wondering why the City Manager and City Councilmember aren’t focusing more of their attention on the City’s problems rather than peeping through my windows to see if I’m switching off a light? I run a fiscally-sound home and don’t need the government, on any level, to tell me how to run it.

How dare they audit my energy use and start comparing my usage to others? As long as I pay my bill each and every month, it’s no one’s business how much electricity I use. When the government starts giving me money to pay my utilities, then it has the right to question how efficiently I’m using that money. Until then, I’d appreciate it if everyone would stop looking over my shoulder.

My home is being compared to approximately 100 occupied, nearby homes that are similar in size to mine. Other than square footage, it doesn’t look as if any other factors were considered. I’m home all day. My computer, fax, scanner, printers and answering machine are vital to my work. Are the

neighbors to whom I'm being compared work from home? Are they commuting to work in Seattle by using public transportation like my husband has for the last 16 years? Or are they commuting in gas-guzzling vehicles? Or are they leaving behind empty homes during the week?

This program is funded by Puget Sound Energy and a grant awarded to my Island by the Washington State Department of Commerce "to help provide innovative energy-saving solutions to local communities." It's a three-year community-wide effort designed to help island homeowners and businesses reduce energy use and costs. Sounds noble and good, right?

In Seattle, the cost of water is going up. Why, you ask? Because folks are using less of it. The utility is facing declining revenue as water usage continues to fall with the poor economy, successive cold summers and successful conservation efforts.

So what happens when we here on the Island achieve these innovative energy-saving solutions? Well, if we go the same route as Seattle did, the rates will go up because we're using less energy.

Supply and demand doesn't seem to apply. As someone in Seattle wrote, "demand for your product goes up, prices go up. Demand for your product goes down, prices go up."

My brother and sister-in-law, who live in Los Angeles, are the most environmentally-conscious people I know and they've done everything possible to be as "green" as they can be. They've installed water-saving toilets, two very expensive on-demand water heaters, a water-saving clothes washer and they wash all dishes by hand. They use environmentally-safe detergents and line dry and only use their gas clothes dryer when absolutely necessary. And what do they get for their awareness and environmental responsibility? Higher utility prices!

Seems as if you're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

Author's website: <http://www.idontgetit.us>