

COMMENTARY

## Rabbis support energy conservation

Special to the H-T

This column is written by Rabbi Paula Winnig, co-chairwoman of the Indiana Board of Rabbis, and Rabbi Brian Besser, secretary of Indiana Board of Rabbis.

Hanukkah, the upcoming Jewish "festival of lights," celebrates the miracle of a small flask of oil.

Containing only enough for one night, it nevertheless continued to burn for eight nights. The miracle derives its power from its implicit acknowledgement of the preciousness of fuel. The ancient rabbis codified the ethic of conservation in the principle known as *baal taschit*: the prohibition against the needless destruction or waste of any resource.

The rabbinic principle of *baal taschit* has only grown in importance in modern times, as we have become acutely aware of the finite limits of our energy reserves. It is our sacred obligation to leave God's

great gift of Creation intact for our children, grandchildren and generations yet to come.

In keeping with these core Jewish values, the Indiana Board of Rabbis recently voted to support the work of energy conservation by Hoosier Jews Till and Tend the Earth. The Indiana Board of Rabbis (IBOR) represents rabbis throughout the state of Indiana serving congregations and communal agencies from diverse denominations.

We constitute a collective rabbinic voice to advocate for Jewish interests and matters of ethical concern, on the statewide, national, and international arenas.

Hoosier Jews Till and Tend is a coalition of Indiana synagogues and Jewish organizations, each of which pledges to reduce energy use in its own institution by at least 25 percent and to reduce energy use in the homes of its members

by at least 1/7th. Cutting energy use by 25 percent is easily achievable — in fact, our local Bloomington synagogue, Congregation Beth Shalom, recently reduced natural gas consumption by 61 percent over a period of just three years. IBOR is proud to note that numerous Hoosier churches and mosques have joined in this endeavor in their own faith communities, and have accomplished similar savings in their pursuit of energy conservation.

Together, let's re-enact the Hanukkah miracle in our day by stretching our precious oil and energy reserves as far as we can — for the sake of God's Earth entrusted to us, and for the sake of future generations.

To find out more about this initiative, and to access tools on the Web to learn how to conserve energy as a faith institution, go to [www.hoosierjewstillandtend.org](http://www.hoosierjewstillandtend.org).