

VIEWPOINT: N.D. can lead on energy front

JAMESTOWN, N.D. — Transitioning to a new clean-energy economy will create a bright economic future for North Dakota. In fact, the transition is already under way.

According to a recent study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, North Dakota's clean-energy jobs grew by more than 30 percent in the past decade, while all other sectors grew by 9 percent.

President Barack Obama and congressional leaders have made a commitment to pass forward-looking legislation that'll continue to develop the clean energy economy while increasing our energy independence and protecting our environment.

North Dakota stands to gain a great deal from clean energy legislation. Our state has a huge potential for wind energy, clean biofuels and other energy sources. The legislation will stimulate economic development and help create new jobs and new businesses — new home-grown industries right here in North Dakota.

A new alliance — the North Dakota Climate Solutions Partnership — has been organized to lead efforts in the state to find global warming solutions and create even more clean-energy jobs. The Environmental Law and Policy Center and other members of the partnership are excited to help North Dakota tap into its wealth of clean energy resources.

Wind energy is just one example of both the recent growth and potential for the clean-energy economy. North Dakota's wind energy industry has seen dramatic growth in recent years, and the North Dakota Public Service Commission estimates that we may have an installed wind capacity of 1,000 megawatts by the end of 2009.

As Public Service Commissioner Tony Clark has pointed out, “that's like adding two new coal plants in a relatively short amount of time. And a new coal plant takes a decade or more to come to fruition.”

Our fossil fuel industries have the potential to access programs and incentives to develop and commercialize clean-energy technologies. And we'll be able to diversify our energy portfolio by creating new, clean-energy sources that are environmentally friendly and stabilize our energy supply.

We can also incorporate clean-energy strategies into our everyday lives. Energy conservation and energy efficiency are the best, cheapest and fastest ways to reduce our impact on the environment. Upgrading our appliances to the most efficient available and weatherizing, our homes will ensure that we are not wasting our energy and money.

Incorporating energy conservation and efficiency beyond our homes and into the workplace and business community also will help our businesses' bottom lines.

Our commitment to stewardship of the climate and a clean-energy future is important for so many reasons. The North Dakota Climate Solutions Partnership will work to ensure that clean-energy legislation has the tools we need to successfully transition to a new, clean-energy economy.

Grieve is a government relations specialist for the Environmental Law and Policy Center. Members of the North Dakota Climate Solutions Partnership include Ducks Unlimited, the Environmental Law and Policy Center, the National Wildlife Federation, North Dakota Farmers Union and the Prairie Climate Stewardship Network, among other groups.

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