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## Wind energy leaders promote benefits of national standard

*By Thom Gabrukiewicz*

With a strong national renewable energy standard in place, South Dakota could see its wind potential whip up jobs and help the nation's economy get rolling again, a group of South Dakotans said Tuesday.

A national renewable energy standard - or RES - would require electric utilities to generate a minimum percentage of power from renewable resources. The American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) and the state's wind energy leaders have called for a national standard of 25 percent by 2025, which would create about 300,000 jobs.

"Wind power is a symbol of hope in our economy and supports thousands of jobs, but U.S. wind turbine manufacturing is lagging at the very time that the global clean energy race is heating up," said Denise Bode, chief executive officer of the AWEA. "One of the most urgent measures that our government can enact is a national renewable electricity standard, which will unleash in the U.S. a wave of manufacturing investment that will otherwise go overseas."

So far, 29 states and the District of Columbia have adopted individual RES programs. South Dakota has a voluntary goal that 10 percent of all retail electricity sold be from renewable and recycled energy by 2015. Currently, the state's wind farms generate 305 megawatts of power.

Since 2000, more than \$500 million has been invested in wind in the state.

"It's vital for the economy of South Dakota, especially in rural South Dakota," said Steve Wegman, executive director of the South Dakota Wind Energy Association. "What it means for landowners is \$3 million in profit and \$4.9 million in new property taxes. As of now, 10 percent of our electricity already comes from wind-generated power. That 10 percent by 2015? We've already surpassed that."

Two bills have been introduced in the U.S. House and Senate that address the RES as part of other legislation. But some say both measures don't go far enough to address measurable commitments to renewables, including wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric and biomass.

"A renewable energy standard demands the nation has a goal," said Greg Von Wald, president of Mitchell Technical Institute, a school that turns out about 40 students a year in wind turbine technology. "And that's going to be 20 to 25 percent, I feel comfortable with that to meet the need."

Besides Von Wald, Wegman was joined Tuesday by Sampson Brown, president and chief executive officer of Knight & Carver Wind Group, which builds turbine blades in Howard; Richard Morrison, chief executive officer of Molded Fiber Glass, a blade manufacturer in Aberdeen; and Jan Deuter, a former school teacher, cattle rancher and wind energy landowner near Ree Heights.

"Our cows don't mind the turbine blades above their heads," Deuter said. "And we can keep up with that good old South Dakota living."

Congress is expected to take up discussion on a RES again next year. Wind energy leaders called on South Dakota's congressional delegation to lead the way and unleash the demand for the state's

renewable resources.

"Twenty-five by 25 takes the uncertainty out of the marketplace," Morrison said. "This can't be state-by-state, it's not that kind of issue. As it exists now, it keeps that private money on the sideline."

Since the 1980s, the federal production tax credit for wind investment has expired three times. That's led to several boom-and-bust cycles within the industry.

"Starts and stops scare off investors," Brown said. "If you make a commitment to a renewable standard, the demand curve will look right and that investment cash would flow. The boom-and-bust periods need to stop."