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## Renewable Energy Standard would benefit South Dakota

By Sampson A. Brown

South Dakota has long been an exporter of essential goods to the rest of America. From beef to minerals to our beautiful scenery, our state has always taken advantage of God-given natural resources to not only provide jobs and livelihoods for our own residents, but also to nourish and power the entire country. Yet, here in 2009, South Dakotans aren't able to capitalize fully on what's become one of our most valuable commodities: the wind.

It's time for that to change. South Dakota ranks fourth in natural wind power capacity, a statistic we hear frequently – and feel on blustery winter days. However, this major energy resource goes largely untapped: South Dakota currently ranks only 20<sup>th</sup> in wind power production. This disparity represents both a loss of major economic activity for the state and a break with our resourceful past. With the right package of policies, South Dakota's wind resources have the potential to be the state's next great export, sending clean, American-made energy to power the rest of the country. That means investment dollars for companies based here and new jobs for South Dakotans.

To create more good-paying jobs just like this, we need Congress to pass a smart, strong national renewable electricity standard, or RES, as part of national climate and clean energy legislation. Congress is debating that legislation now, and passing the right kind of support for clean energy is crucial. Such a policy would require a certain percentage of America's electricity to come from renewable resources like South Dakotan wind, and in a time of recession, a strong RES would protect and grow South Dakota clean energy jobs.

In fact, according to an analysis by the Blue-Green Alliance, South Dakota would see over 3,400 new jobs and 109 new South Dakota companies if America had a 25% RES requirement in 2025. In addition to new, family-supporting manufacturing jobs, South Dakotans would see significant revenues generated from wind farm lease payments to farmers and land-owners, along with increases in our tax base, especially in rural areas.

South Dakota's "green" economy has already started to emerge, as clean energy job growth outpaced regular job growth by 93% over the last decade. Knight & Carver was proud to be a part of that growth. We chose Howard, South Dakota, as the home of our national turbine blade manufacturing operations because building blades in places like Howard, close to wind resources, makes economic sense. Our plant now employs 60 people with good paying jobs in a town of 1,200, with plans to add more in 2010.

Our story is one that can and should be repeated across the state. Developing South Dakota's wind resources will create more opportunities for rural communities, and with a strong, national renewable electricity standard, we can make sure that's the future ahead of us.

The good news is that policymakers in Washington have finally begun to address the immense climate and energy problems America has swept under the rug for years. Legislation was passed by the House in June and is currently being debated in the Senate, and this represents a huge step forward in the march to a clean energy future. The downside is that a strong renewable electricity standard could get left out of the mix; the RES provisions passed by the House and the Senate so far are too weak to jumpstart more growth in wind and other clean energy near-term.

It's especially important to pass a strong national standard now, because China and Europe have already passed aggressive standards that will leave the United States finishing third in the clean energy race. That's an unacceptable outcome for America, which invented most of the clean energy technology those other countries use today.

Our state has an important role to play in accomplishing the vital national goals of solving climate change, keeping the billions we spend on energy inside our borders, and growing the important clean energy manufacturing industries of the future. It's time for us to get smart do what's right for this fast-growing and extremely promising industry. Folks across our state deserve more opportunities for good-paying jobs in clean energy, and Congress should step up and support the work that our companies and citizens have done.

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