

Sioux Falls Argus Leader

August 21, 2009

Repower South Dakota tour promotes clean energy jobs

Howard blade-making plant featured

BY THOM GABRUKIEWICZ

Repower South Dakota blew into Howard on Thursday to tout Knight & Carver Wind Group's blade manufacturing plant -- as well as the estimated 5,000 clean energy jobs it says can be generated in South Dakota through federal climate legislation.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act seeks to decrease greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent and drop global temperatures by 3.6 degrees by 2050. It also calls for creating green energy jobs to wean the nation off foreign oil.

But opponents say the legislation will raise electric bills and the cost of a gallon of gasoline dramatically, which will tax Americans even more.

South Dakota "has made it easy to come here," Brown said. "We're interested in staying - and expanding. This legislation helps us move in that direction."

"The bill will jumpstart the economy, and the economic benefit to South Dakota is 5,000 jobs - these are new jobs that cannot be exported," said Matt McGovern, state director for Repower South Dakota.

"And Howard is the prototype of how rural communities can transform through wind," said state Rep. Mitch Fargen, D-Flandreau.

The community of about 1,100 boasts two wind energy companies, Energy Maintenance Service, which builds, operates and maintains turbine components; and Knight & Carver's blade plant.

Knight & Carver moved into its 26,000-square-foot plant in 2007. It employs 60 people, with a minimum hourly wage of \$13.50, said Sampson Brown, the company's chief executive officer.

South Dakota "has made it easy to come here," Brown said. "We're interested in staying - and expanding. This legislation helps us move in that direction."

The tour was part of the Alliance for Climate Protection's Repower America campaign. In partnership with the Blue Green Alliance, a collection of labor unions and environmental groups, the Made in America Jobs tour highlights the benefits of moving to a clean energy economy through climate legislation. The tour began Thursday and includes 22 states.

"Ten percent of Howard's work force is working in wind energy," said Lindsey Karlson, a Rural Learning Center staffer with Miner County Community Revitalization. "It's something we're very proud of."

A Blue Green Alliance study found that more than 850,000 manufacturing jobs at existing companies could be created by investment into manufacturing parts for wind, solar, geothermal and biomass power. A Center for American Progress report also found that investing \$150 billion a year in America's clean energy economy could create 1.7 million jobs, which would include jobs such as retrofitting and constructing new energy-efficient buildings and manufacturing next-generation, plug-in hybrid and electric cars.

One area where South Dakota is seeing extensive growth is in classes for clean energy jobs. At Mitchell Technical Institute, a new wind turbine technology program drew so many students this year that the class size was doubled to 50. And the two-year associate degree in applied science at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown continues to fill every semester.