



JACKSON HOLE CENTER FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS

February 6, 2017

Matthew H. Mead, Governor, State of Wyoming
Legislative leadership, State of Wyoming

Dear Governor Mead and Wyoming State legislative leadership:

I write to respectfully propose that our state adopt a resolution signifying a “new day” for renewable energy in Wyoming.

Wyoming has world class wind resources. Renewable energy has become cost-competitive with coal and natural gas as a source of electric power. Wind energy in particular holds the potential to reinvigorate Wyoming’s future. By attracting generation and transmission developers and encouraging manufacturers of wind components to site facilities, the state can create new jobs and enlarge its tax base.

Despite Wyoming’s longtime leadership in coal production and innovation to capture, utilize, and store carbon dioxide, coal faces an uncertain future – one we cannot depend on. Many in our state seem to believe that if wind succeeds, coal, a bedrock of the Wyoming economy, will fail. This is not true. Wind is not the enemy of coal.

A resolution signifying a new day in Wyoming for renewable energy will send a strong signal to the market, yielding new investments in the state, creating new jobs, and generating new, diversified, economic growth. Wyoming has helped other energy resources get developed, for instance suspending the severance tax on uranium. Wind should also be incentivized. We offer the following policy recommendations as specific actions to catalyze a new day:

- Reinststate the **sales tax exemption** on wind energy equipment;
- **Streamline local and state permitting procedures** for wind power development and transmission, become a strong advocate for streamlining federal permitting rules under the NEPA;
- Institute **workforce training programs** in wind power engineering, construction and manufacturing;
- Provide support through the WIA for the negotiation of **power purchase and off-take agreements**;
- Promote level playing field for renewable energy with **rural electric cooperatives**;
- Consider **loan guarantees**: utilize WIA’s authority to issue bonds to finance infrastructure and increase this authority to equal that of the Wyoming Pipeline Authority at \$5 billion;
- Provide advocacy relative to grid integration and the creation of **Regional Transmission Organizations (RTO’s)**;
- Encourage **leadership in D.C.** to adopt and advocate for renewable development.

The moment for bold action is now. Our State’s window of opportunity for leadership in renewable energy is quickly closing. Other states are moving forward with the development and deployment of wind power. In addition, advances in technology and the penetration of distributed generation may soon threaten the very idea of long distance transmission of power. We have possibly ten years to serve these markets before technology changes and competition from other states that have developed more robustly threaten the opportunity altogether. Fortunately, some electric utilities and wind power developers in the state have already made significant investments in upfront costs.

I offer these recommendations in the spirit of Wyoming’s future – the jobs we need to create and the new economic growth we need to achieve. A new day in Wyoming for renewable energy will not mean the end of coal in Wyoming. Rather it will mean that our state makes serious strides to achieving economic diversification and becomes a national leader in the energy that will power the future.

Sincerely,

David Wendt
President