

# State takes over No. 4 spot for wind energy

BY RICHARD EDMONSON

After two decades of impressive growth, U.S. wind energy now provides enough energy to power 18 million homes, and Oklahoma's wind energy production is among the best in the nation.



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The American Wind Energy Association found our state ranks No. 4 overall for amount of wind energy produced, beating out Illinois for that spot. Oklahoma is poised to experience even more exciting opportunities in 2015.

According to the Wind Coalition, Oklahoma leaders, over the past 10 years, have leveraged \$120 million in tax credits and incentives into more than \$6.1 billion of capital investment by the wind energy industry. Our commitment to wind energy is creating a competitive environment unmatched by other states and that should be applauded.

The planned construction of the Plains and Eastern Clean Line, a \$2 billion cutting-edge transmission system designed to export wind energy as a commodity, is proof our strategy is working to draw new business into the state while driving energy costs down. The investment is helping us at home, as well. Oklahoma energy customers are now projected to save nearly

\$2 billion in utility costs over the next 20-30 years, according to the Wind Coalition.

Increased wind capacity also means additional opportunities for Oklahomans. The wind industry requires not only technicians at the wind farms, but hardworking, talented people working behind the scenes. These job opportunities have added up to 4,000 direct and indirect jobs and more than \$340 million in labor income since 2003, according to the Economic Impact Group.

There are more than 500 wind-related manufacturing plants in the United States, a number of which are located in Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma College of Law and Oklahoma City University School of Law have also made wind

energy law courses available to their students who want to pursue careers in wind energy.

With the transformative economic benefits of wind energy in mind, it's important that as Oklahomans we voice our support not only of the industry's development but also of public and legislative policies that allow this development to thrive. The Legislature and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission are taking a hard look at landowner notification, wind farm siting and decommissioning.

These important issues need the same balanced approach received by the oil and gas industry where the interests of those who believe development will have a negative impact on their lives are balanced with the huge positive impact

energy development has on our communities and nation. Overregulation of any energy development, including wind, will drive new projects to states on our borders which do not over-regulate the industry thus denying our state additional economic development. I encourage my fellow Oklahomans to call, email or Tweet their state legislators in support of the burgeoning wind industry.

Oklahoma has realized many of the benefits of wind, but there is still opportunity for continued growth with this plentiful Oklahoma commodity in 2015 and beyond.

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*Tulsa World*

April 16, 2015