



September 24, 2009

**The Global Warming Task Force:
A Special Series of Hot Air Reports – Part 3
*Enhanced Renewable Portfolio Standards & Wind Siting Reform***

In my last two Hot Air Reports we began looking at Governor Doyle's Global Warming Task Force Report. The goal of the Governor's Report is to develop strategies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in our state, mainly carbon dioxide. In reality, the report is a blueprint for subjecting Wisconsin to new taxes, increased energy prices and extensive regulations without producing any benefit whatsoever to the Earth's climate.

This week, I will talk about the Task Force's proposals for an Enhanced Renewable Portfolio Standard. For clarification, Wisconsin already has a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). The Task Force's Enhanced RPS would significantly increase our current RPS requirements.

The current RPS resulted from a bill passed by the Legislature in 2006 requiring that 10% of all electricity used in Wisconsin must come from renewable resources by 2015. The most important renewable resources include solar, wind, hydro-electric, geothermal, biomass and fuel cells. While most of these sources of energy do not produce greenhouse gases, they tend to be more expensive than traditional sources of energy like coal or natural gas. According to the Public Service Commission, Wisconsin was producing only 4% of our electricity from renewable resources in 2007.

Under the Task Force's Enhanced RPS the current 10% RPS requirement would be accelerated to 2013, rather than 2015. That's less than four years from now. It would also create requirements that 20% of our electricity come from renewable resources by 2020, and 25% by 2025.

How significant is this? As I mentioned earlier, Wisconsin was producing only 4% of our electricity from renewable resources in 2007. Getting to 10% by either 2013 or 2015 will be a huge and expensive task. The cost will be priced into your utility bills. In fact, the Task Force lists funding sources for their Enhanced RPS as, "**Electric rates paid by utility customers and cooperative members.**" (p.111 Global Warming Task Force Report)

So how will we actually meet our current RPS or the Task Force's Enhanced RPS? The problem for our state is that wind will have to provide most of the solution, since we are too far north and too cloudy for solar to be a big player. Wisconsin is almost maxed out on using potential

hydroelectric sources and biomass puts upward pressure on the price of wood products. Geothermal and fuel cells are limited by cost. Additionally, the Democrats refuse to lift the moratorium on nuclear power (the most cost effective way to lower our CO2 emissions).

The current RPS progress has been achieved mostly with wind projects and explains why you have noticed the recent proliferation of wind mills. Wisconsin's RPS requirements are the direct cause of all the new wind projects in Wisconsin. In fact, the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel reports that Wisconsin wind power capacity increased seven-fold last year and that We Energies has announced plans for another new wind project, costing up to \$530 million.

Wind projects have run into some additional problems besides the cost, because many residents do not want windmills in or near their communities. Common complaints include aesthetics, noise, bird kills and flickering shadows from the revolving blades. This has led local governments to exercise their zoning authority over these projects.

But no more will your local community have the right to decide on wind projects. Last Wednesday the Democrat controlled State Assembly passed AB 256, a wind siting bill, which creates one set of standards for the entire state and overrides local zoning laws. These standards will open the door for a resumption of several stalled wind projects across the state. The bill will likely be signed into law by Governor Doyle. It should be noted this legislation came directly out of the Governor's Task Force.

The door is now open for additional legislation from the Task Force, which I expect to be introduced in the near future. Unless it is stopped, not only will you see many more wind mills going up around the state, you'll see your electric bills going up as well. Some industry observers have commented that there are already upward pressures on electric bills from the current RPS.

But the cost pressure won't stop with wind mills. More next week...

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