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(Neb.)-Nebraska Lawmakers Gear Up For Wind Energy Conference



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 10/28/2013 11:41 AM

(LINCOLN) - Lawmakers are once again looking for ways to attract wind-energy producers to Nebraska. At least seven state lawmakers and Governor Dave Heineman will speak at the sixth annual Nebraska Wind Conference in Lincoln on November 13th-15th. One of the organizers, John Hansen of the Nebraska Farmers Union, says the conference helps generate new ideas based on what has worked in other states.

State senator Heath Mello says he's considering wind-energy legislation next year that would provide a production tax credit to wind farms, similar to one offered by the federal government and other states. In Addition to Mello, Senators Lydia Brasch, Ken Haar, Steve Lathrop, and Ken Schilz have confirmed their attendance at the conference. They will participate in a panel discussion Wednesday to discuss what has happened in the legislature regarding wind and solar energy legislation, and what needs to happen in the future to advance those industries.

The U.S. Department of Energy says Nebraska is the nation's third-windiest state, but ranks 26th in the energy it could now produce. The state lags behind neighboring states South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, and Iowa.

Governor Heineman will welcome attendees to the conference and will address this year's theme "Harvesting Nebraska's Potential" by discussing the benefits of wind and solar energy on the state's economy.

"We are pleased to have Governor Heineman once again welcome attendees to the wind conference," says Hansen. "Governor Heineman recognizes the importance of wind and solar for the State of Nebraska and always has shown his support for this conference."

Conference attendees will also hear from the Public Power Districts about the Future of Renewable Energy in Nebraska. Chief Executive Officer of Omaha Public Power District Gary Gates, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Nebraska Public Power District Tom Kent, and Chief Operating Officer of Lincoln Electric Systems Doug Bantam will give their perspectives in a panel style format.

“Nebraska is unique that it is the only state that is 100% public power, and the Public Power Districts have not only been supportive of wind development, but supportive of the wind conference,” said Dan McGuire, another conference organizer. “We look forward to hearing about their vision for the future of renewable energy in Nebraska.”

Registration for the conference is \$125 through November 8th, and the discounted hotel rate of \$114 plus tax per night will expire on October 30th. For participant registration and to view the program, visit www.NebraskaWindConference.com. To view last year’s presentations, visit <http://www.neo.ne.gov/renew/wind-working-group/2012conference.htm>.

--Some information by Grant Schulte at The Associated Press