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Chu tries to resolve concerns about coal

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Chu promised Tuesday that if confirmed as energy secretary he will pursue poli-



cies aimed at addressing climate change and achieving greater energy independence by developing clean energy.

But he also told lawmakers on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that

Chu he views nuclear power and coal as critical parts of the nation's energy mix. He also said higher gasoline taxes are for now "off the table."

DesMoinesRegister.com

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Cabinet pick says wind energy hinges on power line issue

By PHILIP BRASHER
pbrasher@dmreg.com

Washington, D.C. — Steven Chu, the Nobel laureate selected to be the next energy secretary, says the lack of high-voltage transmission lines is "by far and away the biggest obstacle" to expanding the use of wind power.

But he disagrees with taking authority away from states to decide where lines should go. Some advocates of renewable electricity have advocated giving that authority to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

If Congress were to do that, "my feeling is that the states and local people in those states might react," Chu told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee during his confirmation hearing Tuesday.

"What you really want to do is to make these things happen as quickly as possible," he said. "It has to be a negotiation, quite frankly, in my opinion."

Transmission projects run into opposition from landowners who oppose the lines crossing their properties. Another problem is financing long-distance projects that cross multiple states. States whose consumers who won't use the power object to paying for the lines.

The issue threatens to stunt the growth of Iowa's wind power industry. ITC Midwest, which distributes electricity for Interstate Power and Light Co., and Ohio-based AEP Transmission are working on plans for high-voltage lines that would carry wind power from Iowa and the Dakotas to Chicago and beyond.

Chu became a leading expert on alternative energy as director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California. He is expected to be confirmed easily by the Senate, and his hearing went without a hitch. Panel members pressed him for his views on a range of subjects, from ethanol to coal and nuclear power.

Chu said his experience at the Berkeley lab has made him confident that a new generation of biofuels can be developed from plant cellulose, the fibrous material that makes up cornstalks, trees and grass. The lab is developing bacteria and yeast needed to convert the cellulose into new versions of conventional gasoline and diesel rather than ethanol.

A more pressing question for the ethanol industry is whether motorists will be allowed to fuel conventional cars and trucks with gasoline that contains more than 10 percent ethanol. Chu didn't have an answer for that.

"This is one of the things we have to look at in conjunction with the automobile industry as to whether we can go to E15, E20 and higher," Chu said, referring to the terms for fuel blends that are 15 percent or 20 percent ethanol. "This is something on the table."

The Energy Department has been studying the potential impact of the higher ethanol levels on cars, trucks and the smaller engines used in lawn equipment, snowmobiles and boats.

Ethanol producers said the industry's growth will stop unless the Environmental Protection Agency eases its 10 percent limit on ethanol blending.



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DOE to Invest US \$6M to Reach 20% Wind Energy

Washington, D.C., United States [RenewableEnergyWorld.com]

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has announced a new Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for up to US \$6 million over two years (FY09-FY10), subject to annual appropriations, to address the technical challenges of wind development and market acceptance barriers that were outlined in the 20% Wind Energy by 2030 report that was released last year.

The funding will be available for projects in six different topic areas that include turbine research, development and testing, distributed wind technologies, market acceptance efforts, environmental research and siting strategies, transmission analysis, planning and assessments as well as workforce development.

In May 2008, DOE issued the 20% Wind Energy by 2030 report. The report outlined the fact that the U.S. possesses affordable wind energy resources far in excess of those needed to enable a 20% scenario.

However, DOE also identified major challenges that need to be overcome and require action for this to be possible:

- Major investments in transmission need to be made so that power generated in Midwest locations can be delivered urban centers at great distance
- Larger electric load balancing areas, in tandem with better regional planning and use of complementary generation and storage, so that grid operators can better integrate wind generation into the electric utility grid
- Continued reduction in wind turbine capital costs through technology advancement and improved manufacturing capabilities
- Improved wind turbine performance and reduction of operating and maintenance costs through improved reliability
- Addressing concerns about local siting, wildlife, and environmental issues within the context of electricity generation
- Develop an abundant and skilled workforce to supply the growing renewable energy industry.

Completed FOA applications are due by March 3, 2009. The complete FOA can be viewed at Grants.gov. DOE anticipates notifying applicants selected for award by the end of April 2009 and making awards by the end of September 2009.

<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/news/story?id=54490>

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Deval Patrick unveils big push for wind power

By Associated Press | Tuesday, January 13, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Politics

BOSTON — Gov. Deval Patrick has set an ambitious goal to dramatically increase the state's reliance on wind power over the next dozen years.

By 2020, Patrick wants the state to produce 2,000 megawatts of wind energy, enough to power 800,000 homes.

The state has just nine major wind turbines now, producing less than seven megawatts of power annually.

There are another 300 turbines in the planning stages, including the proposal by Cape Wind Associates to build 130 windmills across 25 miles of federal waters in Nantucket Sound.

Patrick said going from seven megawatts to 2,000 in just over a decade will draw new business and jobs to the state and help make Massachusetts a leader in the development of clean energy technology.

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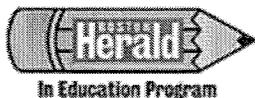
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