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## Renewable-energy leaders gather at CSU to tout growing sector

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Industry leaders for the renewable-energy economy in Colorado, pioneering new and innovative ways to power the state and country, gathered Tuesday at CSU to champion their growing business sector.

The message was clear - renewable energy is not only good for the environment but the economy, state and country.

With a focus on federal legislation, such as the American Clean Energy and Security Act, it is also evident that the United States still has a lot of ground to cover in order to make renewable energy a viable and competitive resource on the global market.

Between Vestas Americas and Abound Solar, wind and solar power were well represented at the forum in Colorado State University's Lory Student Center.

All seven speakers from across the state agreed the renewable-energy sector is growing at a rapid rate, and with the right legislation, Colorado is well-positioned to capitalize on the renewable revolution Bella Energy CEO Jim Welch dubbed as big as the IT industry.

Welch, who provides solar solutions to companies, said he saw a 210 percent compound annual growth in business when Amendment 37 passed in 2004 instituting a new Renewable Standard Portfolio, which requires 10 percent of electricity produced by the state to come from renewable sources by 2015.

"You pay a little bit more to build a market ... that will pay back over the next 20 to 30 years, and you will build the industry for your kids," Welch said. "Solar can be decentralized and integrated in the grid."

Welch projected that Colorado's renewable-energy sector is one of the state's fastest growing industries with \$1.1 billion in revenue and 10,000 jobs this year. He projected that by 2030, that number could grow to \$13 billion and 113,000 jobs.

Abound and Vestas are leading that charge in Colorado as the thin-film solar module and wind turbine companies are already ramping up productions, hiring employees and expanding facilities.

Nick Lenssen, senior specialist and market intelligence with Vestas, said between its facilities in Windsor, Brighton and Pueblo, Vestas will employ 2,500 people by the middle of 2010.

The Danish company is the world's largest producer of wind turbines. In 2007, the company decided to build its first U.S. blade production facility in Windsor based on geography,

transportation and the available work force.

“Wind power is just about 2 percent of the nation’s electricity, but it is growing tremendously,” said Lenssen, who highlighted national policy and transmission of the energy as two areas that need to be addressed for the industry to thrive and grow.

TJ Deora, development manager for Horizon Wind Energy based in Houston, Texas, said Texas is leading the country when it comes to transmission, while Colorado sits eighth in the nation.

“The reality is the wind resource in Texas is not as good as the wind resource in Colorado,” said Deora, who noted Colorado lacks proactive investment in transmission and an open market.

Abound Solar, a CSU start-up company 15 years in the making, is making its impact on the state as well with locations in Fort Collins, Loveland and Longmont.

Russell Kanjorski, vice president of marketing with Abound, said between \$15 million in federal support and \$150 million in private equity the solar module company is ramping up its first production facility in Longmont with 230 employees.

Kanjorski said at full production next year, they will create three million solar panels annually. Aside from the immediate jobs produced by the company, Kanjorski noted they work with local companies such as Wirsol, Advanced Energy and local vendors to bring more business home.

“This is an unbelievably huge market,” he said. “The energy market is the biggest in the world.”

For some time, Europe — Germany, in particular — has dominated the market when it comes to renewable energy.

Kanjorski used Germany as an example of where the United States could be one day if policy and federal regulations make the market a priority. He said Germany’s renewable-energy sector has around 300,000 employees, which will soon eclipse the automotive industry there.

Reaction to the American Clean Energy and Security Act, designed to implement comprehensive energy and climate legislation that would establish cap and trade system to address climate change, by the representatives was less than enthusiastic.

Lenssen described the House version of the act as “weak,” while Anna Giovinetto, vice president of public affairs with Renewable Energy Systems Americas Inc., said that while the effort was appreciated, the bill is flawed.

Giovinetto said the standards are too low and are cannibalized by the energy efficiency.

To strive for improvements to the bill, Giovinetto said her organization has joined the Renewable Electricity Standard, or RES, Alliance for Jobs, which is a coalition of renewable energy companies and national renewable energy associations pushing for stronger energy legislation.

The alliance seeks a strong national RES, and Giovinetto said a strong American policy and oversight is needed to demonstrate to the world the U.S.’s commitment to renewable energy.

“Leading the world in renewable energy would revitalize the nation’s economy,” she said.