KANSAS MUST LEAD
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Kansas has a strong history of leadership in the important areas of aviation, agriculture, energy, health care, and manufacturing. Kansans have long embraced hard work, innovation, and an entrepreneurial spirit to make our state a leader. We again have the opportunity to lead in the area of energy security, the environment, and innovation for our nation. This time it is through the proposed Sunflower Bio-Energy Complex in Holcomb.

The current world political situation, along with energy supply constraints, demands that Americans take a lead in energy innovation. Today, hostile dictators control many key oil and gas producing regions, oil prices hover at nearly $100 a barrel, and volatile natural gas prices have lead to higher home heating costs. For these reasons, we must utilize our domestic assets such as ethanol and other biofuels, conservation practices, exploration and production technologies, and the energy-rich resources within our own borders.

American-produced coal must be counted among these important sources. After all, United States coal deposits contain more energy than that of all the world's oil reserves combined. With this in mind, removing coal from the U.S. energy supply picture should be considered irresponsible. Yet this is exactly what has happened. As most everyone knows, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation is seeking to expand their existing power plant in Holcomb. However, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment recently denied the permits necessary for the expansion. Not only is this decision not supported by the laws and statutes of Kansas, it has an adverse impact upon the renewable energy industry and also costs Kansas hundreds of jobs and billions of dollars in investment. This decision could have a lasting impact upon the future of the state.

This decision is not in the best interests of Kansas. It is not in the best interest of the environment.

I was disappointed in the decision to deny the permits for the Sunflower plant expansion because it is clearly not supported by Kansas law. There is not a law on the books in Kansas, or anywhere else in the United States, that regulates the gas carbon dioxide. For KDHE to deny these permits based simply on their concerns over carbon dioxide is against legislative intent and does not have statutory authority.

Most of us are familiar with the debate on global warming. This is an issue I have studied closely over the past several years. I do, in fact, believe that global warming is occurring and I believe humans have played some role in this. The average global temperature over the past 100 years has risen by about one degree Fahrenheit. However, it is not clear how much of this rise in temperatures is due to human contributions and how much can be attributed to the Earth’s and sun’s natural cycles. One thing remains

clear: this issue should be decided by the citizens elected to the State Legislature in Kansas, in concert with the Governor, and not by Administrative fiat.

This decision is also harmful to the renewable energy industry we all hope to foster in the state. In addition to the two new power plants, Sunflower is hoping to build a state-of-the-art Integrated Bio-Energy Center at their Holcomb site. This Center will incorporate an ethanol plant, livestock facilities, and perhaps most exciting, an algae reactor for biodiesel production. The plan is to capture the carbon dioxide emissions from the three plants and pump it onto the algae. Not only does this sequester up to 40% of the carbon emissions, but it also serves as a nutrient for the algae, increasing its yield. This Bio-Energy Center was built around the power plant expansion. It is a $417 million dollar investment that would create over 100 new jobs. These new technologies will be developed in Kansas and can be leveraged for new economic opportunities for our state in the growing global marketplace for environmental solutions. Unfortunately, the future of this first-of-its-kind Bio-Energy Center is in doubt.

The environmental impact of this project would be positive. That is correct: by removing approximately 40% of carbon dioxide produced, incorporating algae-enhanced biodiesel production, and using higher efficiency electricity-producing methods, this plant will change coal-based power generation forever. Furthermore, this project will displace other coal-fired units that are less efficient and that produce more carbon dioxide. The task of meeting America's future energy needs involves coal, and the key is to produce a smaller carbon footprint while at the same time increasing energy security for our nation. This plant does that, and does it in cutting edge ways.

The decision to deny the air quality permits is also harmful to developing more wind energy in the state. The new expansion would have provided new transmission lines for wind energy projects to access.

Finally, this project represented a chance to provide a significant investment for western Kansas. As those who live in western part of the state know, many of their sons and daughters leave for college and never move back home. Numerous counties in Kansas, particularly in the western part of the state, have suffered a crippling out-migration of their population. With the Sunflower project, a part of the state that desperately needs new jobs could have begun to reverse the trend of out-migration.

As a result of the Sunflower expansion, communities throughout the region would benefit from new jobs, new tax revenues, and an increased demand for goods and services. The planned expansion would be a $3.6 billion dollar investment and result in hundreds of new jobs for the area with workers earning over $16 million per year. That is a significant amount of economic development that is now in jeopardy. During the several year construction period, there would be an additional 2,400 jobs created for construction. These workers would earn more than $78 million per year, and the taxes collected by the state and localities would increase by over $9 million.

One is left to wonder what Kansas industry is next in line on the slippery slope to be denied an air quality permit. Is it the burgeoning ethanol industry, the booming aircraft industry, or the world-class cattle industry? All of these produce some carbon dioxide.

Having reasonable electric power prices and a stable regulatory environment has traditionally been a strength and anchor for businesses to expand and locate here. The recent KDHE decision throws that to the wind with a regulatory decision made outside of statutory authority. As we look to the future, Kansas must lead and grow in environmentally sound ways. The Sunflower Bio-Energy Complex in Holcomb would do these things. We must not let a partisan political agenda stop this growth. Through hard work, innovation, and an inclusive, democratic process, Kansas can – and will – remain a leader.