

## **Gongwer News Service**

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### **REPORT SAYS ALTERNATIVE ENERGY COULD BRING 35,000 JOBS TO STATE**

If Michigan lawmakers can beat other Midwest states in the race to approve renewable energy portfolio standards, it can provide the incentive for alternative energy manufacturers to set up shop in the state, bringing up to 35,000 jobs with them, said a report released on Wednesday from the Blue Green Alliance, a partnership of the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club.

According to the report, the state is ranked fourth for its job potential, right behind Wisconsin and ahead of Missouri. If it utilized its potential, the state could add 24,350 jobs in wind power, 6,644 in solar power, 1,502 in geothermal power and 2,281 jobs in biomass.

Pennsylvania is among the states that has taken advantage of its alternative energy potential, opening up formerly closed manufacturing facilities to employ workers building components for renewable energy systems, said Dan Ferson, a steel worker who spoke at a press conference, hosted by the AFL-CIO, to announce the report.

"Wouldn't it be nice to open up some of our closed auto plants in Michigan?" he said.

Unfortunately, said Mark Gaffney, president of the AFL-CIO, if other Midwest states act faster at enacting portfolio standards, Michigan residents will be helping to grow the economies of its neighboring states instead of adding jobs here.

Illinois is big competition, Mr. Gaffney said. With a possible 56,579 new positions, it ranked number one in job creation potential and it's close enough that Michigan companies could consider traveling there to get parts instead of having them built here.

Rep. Frank Accavitti (D-Eastpointe) said he's going to do what he can to stop that from happening by passing renewable portfolio standards legislation.

"Michigan is a leader, not a follower," he said. "That's why we will enact a 10 percent renewable energy standard by 2015."

But passing renewable energy standards alone won't bring in new alternative energy investments, said Dan Bishop, spokesperson for Consumers Energy, the state's second largest supplier of electricity.

Currently, Consumers gets about 5 percent from its power from alternative energy, mostly wind and biomass power, and is prepared to notch that up to 10 percent by 2015. It also wants to build a fifth "clean burning" coal plant in the state in order to meet Michigan's ever-increasing energy needs, Mr. Bishop said.

Mr. Bishop said that renewable energy legislation has to be combined with efforts to reform PA 141, the law that was supposed to open up customer choice in the 1990s but has had limited success because of the lack of energy suppliers. He said that as long as energy companies can't guarantee to their investors that they have customers who will stick with their company, they will have a hard time getting money to invest in Michigan.

"Consumers is prepared to invest billions of dollars in renewable energy but our lenders want assurance that we have a solid market," he said.

Mr. Accavitti's office has been working on legislation to address the concerns of the industry, a draft of which is complete but probably won't be ready for committee until sometime after break, his staff said.

HB 4562, also introduced by Mr. Accavitti, should be in committee by the beginning of December, he said. In the meantime, it has gone through several workgroups that have changed it from its original form. As introduced it would have required that companies gradually increase their renewable energy usage until 2015, but that requirement has been eliminated, Mr. Accavitti said.

Although there are several bills in both the House and Senate that address renewable portfolio standards, Mr. Accavitti said he is confident the House will pass "one comprehensive bill."