

Roth: Wind energy essential to Oklahoma's energy mix, economy

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on March 21, 2016.



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Wind energy is vital to Oklahoma's energy mix and economy. In addition to providing 17 percent of the electricity powering our state, the wind energy industry has invested billions in our communities through capital projects, jobs, taxes,

landowner payments and contributions.

Recently, a small faction of renewable energy opponents has spread inaccurate, inconsistent and misleading information at the Capitol and among Oklahomans. It's time we hold this group accountable by dispelling myths and sharing facts about wind energy and its contributions to our state. Wind energy companies have invested nearly \$10 billion in Oklahoma electricity-producing facilities in the last decade-and-a-half.

Wind energy companies contribute tens of millions of dollars annually in taxes, including those that support Oklahoma schools, and pay more than \$11 million each year to Oklahoma landowners through land lease payments. Economists estimate that owners of wind energy projects will pay more than \$1 billion in ad valorem taxes from 2003-2043, providing significant funding for our schools and career technology centers.

As our state leaders face budget challenges, there's been much conversation about the wind industry's one remaining tax incentive. At the end of 2016, there will be only one tax credit remaining for companies that produce electricity using zero-emissions facilities in our state, including wind, solar, hydropower and geothermal energy. This tax credit directly benefits customers, as wind is currently Oklahomans' cheapest form of electricity. And that cost savings in our utility bills benefits every single Oklahoman.

In light of our state's budget issues, we should actively encourage wind developers and others to invest in Oklahoma versus taking their jobs, tax dollars and land lease payments elsewhere, like Kansas or Texas.

Gov. Mary Fallin and other pro-Oklahoma leaders have emphasized the importance of not only nurturing growth of businesses within Oklahoma, but also bringing out-of-state

investment here. The wind energy industry is a textbook example of attracting dollars into the state that contribute to the success of Oklahoma businesses, such as construction, manufacturing and more. These are dollars that in the future could be invested elsewhere.

A diverse economy and energy supply is good for our state, communities, schools and citizens. And that's especially true when some energy sectors are struggling because of global pressures like oversupply of world oil. Ask your legislator to support wind energy, a crucial part of Oklahoma's long-term economic health and diverse energy mix.

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