

# Roth: Oklahomans deserve to hear the facts about wind energy

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on June 20, 2016.

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## Oklahomans deserve to hear facts about wind energy

It's no surprise that a review of taxes and tax incentives has recently garnered significant attention from lawmakers, voters and the news media as legislators worked this session to combat a historic budget shortfall. One of the most scrutinized policies has been the zero-emissions tax credit, set to expire in 2020, which will be the wind energy

industry's only remaining tax credit as of the end of this year.

As an Oklahoman dedicated not just to forward-looking, clean energy solutions, but also as someone who champions a diverse energy economy in our state, I've been floored by the misinformation about wind energy espoused recently by some state officials, reporters and other influencers. It's time to set the record straight.

Perhaps the most egregiously misrepresented topic is the value of the last remaining tax credit in comparison to the dollars wind energy brings to our state, both in terms of corporate, ad valorem and other tax contributions and in terms of investment, jobs and infrastructure.

Some outspoken opponents have nonsensically implied wind energy's one incentive is to blame for everything from the budget deficit to ongoing declines in general revenue collections. However, they fail to produce numbers that support these claims and do not consider how incentives to other industries – some of which receive multiple incentives – affect the state's coffers as well. This paints an inflammatory, misleading and inaccurate picture of the billions of dollars the wind energy industry has contributed and will continue to contribute to our tax base and to state and local economies.

For 2015, the wind energy industry will receive an estimated \$46 million as a result of this tax credit, a helpful but relatively small incentive compared to other industries, when considering facts such as:

- The industry has invested nearly \$10 billion in Oklahoma and plans to continue investing.
- Economists predict wind energy developers will contribute about \$1.2 billion in ad valorem taxes alone through 2043, directly benefiting local schools and communities.

- More than 7,000 Oklahomans can attribute their jobs to wind energy.
- Oklahoma's largest utilities (OG&E and PSO) have locked in over \$2 billion in customer savings through their own wind contracts, according to their own statements.

The zero-emissions tax incentive was created with the goal of drawing renewable investment to Oklahoma during a time when we were missing out on these dollars due to more attractive financial circumstances in neighboring states. Because of our incentive, wind energy now produces almost one-fifth of the electricity powering our homes and businesses and provides the cheapest form of electricity to Oklahomans. The case for keeping wind in our diverse energy mix is a strong one. And it's made even stronger by tough state budgets reeling from a downturn in the oil and gas industries.

I encourage our elected officials, news media and others to check the facts and make sure the full story on wind energy is being told. As November elections draw near and Oklahoma voters evaluate our state's leadership, its only right they hear the unbiased truth about this major economic contributor for Oklahoma. The truth my friend, is blowing in the wind.

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