Citizens' Climate Lobby

North Dakota Chapter
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Dear Committee Members,

We support resolution SB2360 and its call for an interim study of North Dakota's geothermal resources and opportunities.

North Dakota has long been an energy powerhouse, yet geothermal energy remains an untapped opportunity. With our state's rich subsurface resources, strong workforce skilled in drilling and energy production, and existing expertise at the University of North Dakota (Drs. William Gosnold and Moones Alamooti), we are uniquely positioned to harness geothermal energy in ways that benefit our economy, energy security, and environment.

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Energy highlighted that sedimentary basin geothermal resources, such as those found in North Dakota, could supply up to 120 gigawatts (GW) of clean energy nationwide—enough to power millions of homes and industries without relying on imports or weather-dependent sources [DOE, 2023].

Geothermal power involves a very small operational footprint, which is an important consideration in protecting the views and vistas in western North Dakota. Geothermal power generation does not emit greenhouse gases yet provides a firm power source.

Geothermal: A Path to Energy Independence & Economic Growth

Developing geothermal energy in North Dakota could:

- Strengthen Energy Security: Unlike wind and solar, geothermal energy operates 24/7, providing consistent power without dependency on unpredictable weather conditions [EIA, 2023].

- Support Rural & Tribal Communities: Many of North Dakota's low-income and rural areas face energy insecurity. Geothermal direct heating and power generation could provide affordable, local energy while creating good-paying jobs in energy production and infrastructure.

- Protect Natural Landscapes: Geothermal power involves a very small operational footprint, making it ideal for preserving the views and vistas of western North Dakota while providing clean, firm power with no greenhouse gas emissions.

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- Attract Investment & Innovation: Geothermal development has the potential to bring in over $3 billion in investment nationally by 2030 and support tens of thousands of new jobs in subsurface engineering, construction, and plant operations [Geothermal Rising, 2023].

Leveraging Existing Infrastructure: A Win-Win for Industry & the Environment

North Dakota's oil and gas sector has built a world-class workforce and highly sophisticated drilling infrastructure. Both can be strategically repurposed for geothermal energy development.

With over 30,000 inactive oil and gas wells statewide, this presents an unparalleled opportunity to:

- Reduce environmental liabilities from well plugging and abandonment
- Extend the life of existing infrastructure by using geothermal technology to extract heat from depleted reservoirs
- Generate new revenue streams for the energy sector, providing a long-term transition pathway for North Dakota's energy workers [NREL, 2023]

A study by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) found that converting just 5% of inactive wells into geothermal systems could generate hundreds of megawatts of clean power, while saving millions in well closure costs [NREL, 2023].

Aligning North Dakota's Energy Future with Market Demand

The demand for clean, reliable energy is growing, with more than 40 U.S. utilities setting net-zero carbon goals by 2050. Geothermal energy can help North Dakota remain competitive in the evolving energy economy, ensuring long-term market stability and positioning our state as a leader in next-generation energy solutions [INL, 2023].

A Call for Action: Advancing Geothermal Exploration in North Dakota

By supporting Senate Bill 2360, we can:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of North Dakota's geothermal potential
- Leverage existing expertise at the University of North Dakota and within the energy industry
- Explore policy incentives that encourage private investment and research partnerships
- Position our state as a leader in emerging energy technologies

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North Dakota has never shied away from energy innovation—and this study is a necessary first step to ensuring we fully evaluate the potential for geothermal energy to strengthen our economy, create jobs, and provide sustainable, locally produced energy for decades to come. This resolution for an interim study of geothermal resources and opportunities is a practical and essential step toward realizing an "all of the above" energy portfolio.

As an organization committed to sustainable energy policies, economic resilience, and climate solutions, we believe this legislation represents a forward-thinking step in strengthening North Dakota's energy leadership while safeguarding its environmental and economic future.

On behalf of Citizens Climate Lobby – North Dakota Chapter, we urge you to support Senate Bill 2360 and move forward with this critical study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.