

Industrial Commission of North Dakota Will Support Transmission Authority Legislation

The Industrial Commission of North Dakota announced today it would support legislation to establish a state-authorized Transmission Authority as another tool toward developing additional electric transmission facilities.

"North Dakota needs to move forward with a transmission authority to develop more transmission, both in state and beyond, in order to encourage more energy production for both coal and wind-based generation," said Gov. John Hoeven. "That's why today I recommended that the Industrial Commission take action to pass legislation in the next session. The state of Wyoming has established a transmission authority, which is helping them develop more transmission, and North Dakota can do it, too."

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem said, "Our state is on the verge of a new era in building clean generation sources and helping our region meet its growing energy demand, but we are currently hamstrung by the physical constraints of existing transmission lines."

"Rural communities that want to broaden their economic base by building new wind turbines have been stymied by transmission bottlenecks," said Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson. "We need to look at alternatives and solutions to this problem."

The 2003 North Dakota Legislature provided authority to the Commission to give priority to activities that would solve the state's transmission export constraints.

Already, the Commission helped to facilitate the formation of the Upper Great Plains Transmission Coalition, which is composed of wind, coal and transmission interests to develop strategies that address the transmission constraint issue.

The Transmission Authority, under the direction of the Industrial Commission, would have the ability to plan, finance, maintain and operate transmission facilities within, and outside, of the state of North Dakota. The Commission would only use the Transmission Authority after first giving utilities and other interested parties priority in building additional transmission facilities first.

Members of the Commission reiterated that the Transmission Authority would only become involved after public notice of its intent to construct transmission facilities and after no private entity had stepped forward or been identified to build additional transmission facilities.

The Industrial Commission consists of Gov. John Hoeven as chairman, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem and Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson. The Legislature created the Industrial Commission of North Dakota in 1919 to conduct and manage, on behalf of the State, certain utilities, industries, enterprises and business projects established by state law.