



A 20 Percent National Renewable Electricity Standard Will Create Jobs and Save Consumers Money

A national renewable electricity standard would require electric utilities to supply a minimum percentage of their electricity from renewable sources such as wind, solar, and bioenergy.¹ Similar policies have already been enacted in Colorado and 21 other states.

The U.S. Senate has passed a 10 percent by 2020 national standard three times since 2002—most recently in June 2005. Congress has also considered a national standard of 20 percent by 2020.

In September 2004, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) used the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) National Energy Modeling System computer model to examine the costs and benefits of a 20 percent by 2020 national standard.² We modified the model using more optimistic assumptions for renewable energy technology costs and performance that are more in line with projections by the Department of Energy's national laboratories.³ Our analysis found that a 20 percent standard would reduce electricity and natural gas prices and provide significant economic and environmental benefits for the Rocky Mountain State.

New Jobs and Income

Our analysis found that under a 20 percent national standard, Colorado would increase its total home-grown renewable power to more than 4,150 megawatts (MW) by 2020. The majority of this development would be powered by Colorado's strong wind resources. This level of renewable development would produce enough electricity to meet the needs of 2.6 million typical homes, provide nearly 22 percent of the electricity sales in the state, and reduce the use of imported coal.

Arizona has the technical potential to generate more than twice its current electricity needs from renewable energy. Colorado has the technical potential to generate nearly 10 times its current electricity needs from renewable energy.

Renewable energy development would create high-paying jobs and other economic benefits in Colorado. By 2020, the 20 percent standard would generate 5,870 jobs in manufacturing, construction, operation, maintenance, and other industries—more than three times as many as fossil fuels, representing a net increase of nearly 4,000 jobs by 2020.⁴ It would also generate an additional \$140 million in income and \$100 million in gross state product in Colorado's economy.

Colorado Benefits from a 20 Percent by 2020 National Renewable Electricity Standard

Job Creation

- 5,870 new jobs—three times as many as generating electricity from fossil fuels

Economic Development

- \$1.7 billion in new capital investment
- \$113 million in new local tax revenues
- \$79 million in income to ranchers and rural landowners

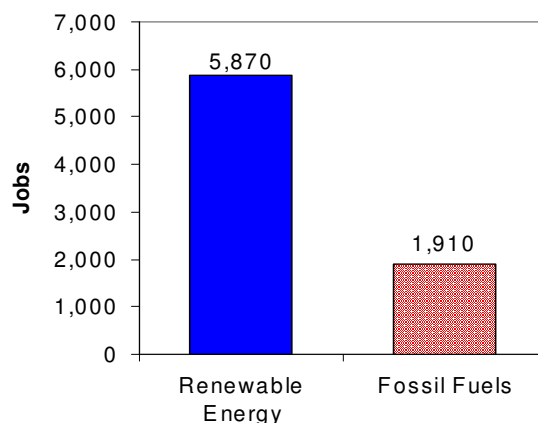
Consumer Savings

- \$1.3 billion in lower electricity and natural gas bills

Healthier Environment

- National reductions in global warming pollution equal to taking nearly 71 million cars off the road
- Less air pollution, damage to land, and water use

Job Creation in Colorado, Renewable Energy* vs. Fossil Fuels (2020)



*Under a 20 percent by 2020 renewable electricity standard

Economic Benefits for Rural Communities

Many of the jobs identified above would be created in rural areas where the renewable energy generating facilities would be located. By 2020, the 20 percent national standard would also provide a boost to Colorado's economy in other ways:

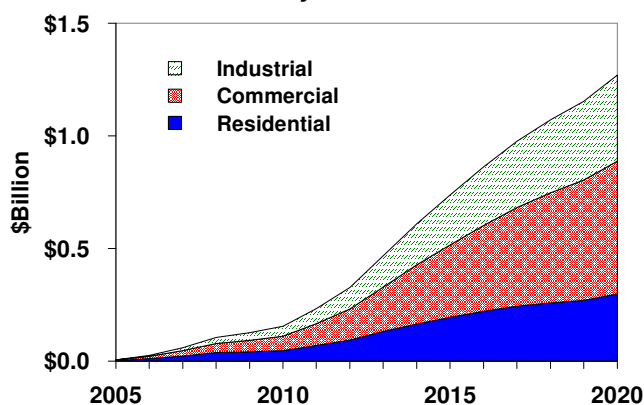
- \$1.7 billion in new capital investment
- \$113 million in new property tax revenues for local communities
- \$42 million in payments to rural areas resulting from biomass energy production
- \$37 million in lease payments to ranchers and rural landowners resulting from wind power generation⁵

Consumer Savings

The 20 percent by 2020 standard would also increase competition in the marketplace, reducing long-term energy costs for homes and businesses by gradually lowering natural gas and electricity prices. By 2020, the savings in

Colorado alone would amount to nearly \$1.3 billion. Every sector of the state's economy would benefit, with commercial, industrial, and residential customers saving a total of \$590 million, \$380 million, and \$300 million respectively by 2020.

Cumulative Energy Bill Savings in Colorado, by Sector



*Under a 20 percent by 2020 renewable electricity standard. Excludes transportation.

Public Health and Environmental Protection

Increased renewable energy use would reduce toxic air pollution from power plants that threaten people's health by burning coal, oil, and natural gas. It would also reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which cause global warming by trapping heat in the atmosphere. The 20 percent national standard will reduce CO₂ emissions by 434 million metric tons per year by 2020—a reduction of 15 percent below “business-as-usual levels”, equivalent to taking nearly 71 million cars off the road. And by reducing the need to extract, transport, and consume fossil fuels, a national renewable electricity standard would limit the damage done to our water and land and conserve our natural resources for future generations.

A Cleaner, Safer Energy Future

A national renewable electricity standard would make Colorado's energy supply—and the energy supply of the entire United States—more reliable and secure. It would use local energy sources to create high-skilled jobs in Colorado, improve the state's rural economies, and put energy dollars back into the pockets of Colorado's consumers. Even under a 10 percent national standard, both UCS and EIA analysis shows Colorado would see all of these important benefits, but at lower levels than what would occur under a 20 percent standard.⁶ A 20 percent national renewable electricity standard is a common-sense step away from our dependence on an unstable, dirty fossil fuel supply, and toward a future built on clean, renewable energy.

For additional information, visit the UCS Clean Energy web site at www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy.

¹ The renewable electricity standard is also known as a renewable portfolio standard or RPS.

² An update to our 2004 analysis is currently underway, and is scheduled for release in Summer 2007.

³ UCS evaluated a 20 percent by 2020 national standard proposal by Senator Jeffords (I-VT) and the tax credits for renewable energy that were supported by the Senate energy bill conference committee in November 2003. More information about UCS's modeling approach can be found at www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/renewable_energy/page.cfm?pageID=1505 and in the October 2001 report *Clean Energy Blueprint*, available online at www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/renewable_energy/page.cfm?pageID=44.

⁴ We conservatively assume that 33 percent of the manufacturing for the wind and solar technologies installed in Colorado is produced by businesses located in the state. We also do not include any jobs or economic development from Colorado manufacturers exporting equipment to other states or countries. If Colorado is able to attract renewable energy manufacturers to produce equipment for facilities in the state and for export, the jobs and income from the renewable electricity standard would increase significantly.

⁵ Results are presented in cumulative net present value 2002\$ using a seven percent real discount rate. Job results are for the year 2020.

⁶ For more information, see *Renewing Colorado's Economy: A 10 Percent National Renewable Electricity Standard Will Save Consumers Money and Create Jobs*, available online at www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/renewable_energy_basics/renewing-americas-economy.html