

Clean Wisconsin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 17th, 2009

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Wind Siting Bill Passes Major Legislative Hurdle with Strong Bipartisan Support *Assembly Committee Passes AB 256, a Bill to Support Job Growth and Clean Wisconsin's Environment*

Madison, Wis. – Wisconsin could soon see greater growth in the promising wind energy industry after the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities passed Assembly Bill 256 today, a bipartisan bill that would encourage growth in the clean energy industry by replacing a chaotic patchwork of local regulations with sensible statewide standards for permitting safe wind farms.

“Wind energy holds the potential to address many of the greatest problems facing our state –it can clean our environment and reduce global warming pollution while reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and creating jobs for hard working Wisconsinites,” said Amber Meyer Smith, program director at Clean Wisconsin the state’s largest environmental advocacy organization. “With so much to gain, we’re extremely encouraged that the legislature seems poised to eliminate administrative barriers holding up the development of this promising infant industry.”

As other industries struggled in poor economic times and cut workers, the wind energy industry grew immensely in 2008 – increasing its national workforce by 70 percent to over 85,000 workers. Unfortunately, while wind developers stand ready to invest in Wisconsin’s economy and put Wisconsinites to work building safe wind farms, a complicated system of over-stringent local regulations currently puts our state at a disadvantage to neighboring states, holding up more than an estimated 500 megawatts of wind farm development in the state.

Assembly bill 256 would charge the Wisconsin Public Service Commission with studying and determining safe permitting standards for wind farms, then replacing the current disorganized system that discourages the growth of the wind energy industry with sensible statewide standards.

“In challenging economic times, why not help investors put Wisconsinites to work supplying clean energy to power our homes, schools and businesses?” said Smith. “The Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities deserves praise for carefully crafting legislation that ensures safe wind farms will be permitted across the state.”

Unlike energy produced from dirty fossil fuels, wind farms developments serve as an investment in Wisconsin’s economy by putting Wisconsinites to work producing clean, renewable energy. With growth of the wind energy industry, Wisconsinites will manufacture wind turbine parts, operate machinery necessary to erect and maintain wind turbines, and build access roads. Wind farms also provide a valuable new source of revenue to farmers who can lease their land to wind farm companies to harvest energy from the sky as farmers continue to cultivate crops from fields below.

“Why send billions of dollars out of state for dirty, polluting fossil fuels when we could invest in our own economy and produce clean energy right here in Wisconsin?” said Smith. “We applaud the representatives on the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities for their bipartisan vote today to make Wisconsin a cleaner, better place to live.”

Assembly Bill 256 now moves to the Senate and the full Assembly for a vote. The full Assembly could vote on the measure as early as next week.

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Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and polluters accountable. Founded in 1970 as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, Clean Wisconsin exposes corporate polluters, makes sure existing environmental laws are enforced, and educates citizens and businesses. On behalf of its 10,000 members and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play. Phone: 608-251-7020, Fax: 608-251-1655, Email: information@cleanwisconsin.org, Website: www.cleanwisconsin.org.