

# LETTER: Clearing the air on wind energy

To the Editor:

Last week it was claimed by a wind opponent that "the economic development, local jobs, money for the schools and counties is just Big Wind's smokescreen to get people on board." But wind does bring economic opportunity and prosperity to rural communities, and not just to the landowners who will receive lease payments. Some of the earliest wind farms in South Dakota were built around 2002 along Buffalo Ridge, an excellent wind area bordering Minnesota. These wind farms have been paying dividends to local schools and governments ever since. From 2009 to 2016, Brookings County received over \$1.9 million, the Elkton School District received over \$1 million, the Deubrook school district received over \$1.9 million, and four area townships each received between \$78,000 and \$165,000 in tax revenue from the wind farms in the county. Wouldn't it be great if you could bring these kinds of benefits to your rural area?

Wind also has follow-on benefits. Facebook recently announced they will build a data center outside Omaha because they were guaranteed that they could power it with 100 percent renewable wind energy. That's 1,000 construction jobs followed by 100 to 115 permanent data center jobs. That's real economic growth that puts real dollars in the local and state economy.

Those who claim that the utilities are building wind farms just to capture the expiring production tax credit are wrong. Utilities cannot just build whatever they want and expect to be able to charge customers for it. Electric utilities are highly regulated through each state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Before a utility can add a generating source to its rate base, it must demonstrate to the PUC that the additional power is needed or that it lowers the cost of electricity for its customers. Otherwise, they will not get their operating license, and that would put some utilities into bankruptcy so they will never take a chance on that.

No power generation source is perfect, but utilities are choosing wind as part of their mix because it is low cost, clean, reliable and there is no fuel cost.

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Prevailing Winds

Avon