

Just Smart: Wind Energy Boosts Energy Independence in America

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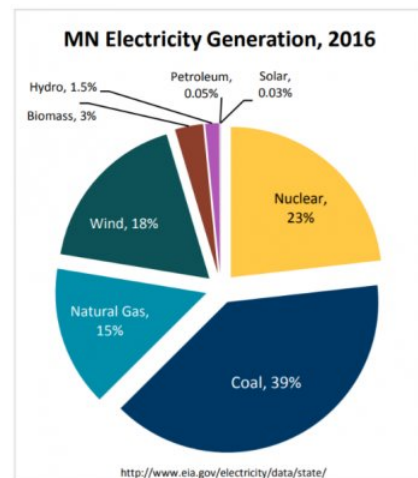
One very important component that helps keep the U.S. economy humming is the availability of cheap, reliable electricity to power our lives. Investing in low-cost wind energy to stay competitive and bolster our energy independence is just smart. We all take energy for granted - and that's a good thing! But, if we want to keep benefitting from cheap power at the flick of a switch, we need to put our energy future into our own hands. With the vast renewable energy resources available to us right here at home, Americans should not have to succumb to energy price hikes due to geopolitics in the Middle East. Wind energy is a low-cost, reliable source of energy that is homegrown and bolsters our energy independence by diversifying our energy mix, employing Americans, and providing a hedge against market fluctuations in our fossil fuel supply.

Ask any retirement planner how to best invest in your future, and they'll tell you to diversify your portfolio. That way, if one of your investments declines, you have other investments to make up the difference. Farmers have been successfully diversifying their operations by producing many commodities - corn, soybeans, cattle, hogs, and more - which allows them to shelter themselves from volatile market prices and better plan for the future health of their operation.

Our energy system follows this same principle. By using many sources to generate electricity, we give ourselves the flexibility to use the least-cost source that is available at any given time. Minnesota has been adding a variety of new resources - natural gas, wind, and solar to our generation mix- but much more can be done. Last year, Minnesota [generated](#) 18.2% of its electricity production from wind energy. That certainly deserves praise, but we are still overly reliant on fossil fuel sources and under-invested in renewable energy that would better diversify our mix.

Wind energy is uniquely poised to guarantee cheap power for decades. That's because wind doesn't have a fuel cost unlike other forms of generating electricity like natural gas and coal, whose prices fluctuate (and oftentimes can be quite volatile). Wind energy is already a [least-cost form of new electricity](#) in the state, and it can guarantee today's low price for the next 25 years. By investing in wind, we are giving ourselves the freedom to choose cheap, clean energy instead of being held hostage by volatile fossil fuel markets.

Wind energy doesn't just support our energy independence by providing energy at a guaranteed low cost -- it's also keeping our electric grid reliable. In addition to providing another source of generating electricity, wind turbines have begun [delivering more power more often](#) thanks to technological advancements and improvements in wind speed forecasting. The truth is no energy source is available 100 percent of the time. In April 2018, U.S. coal plants [were used](#) at only 41.8 percent of their electricity-



making capacity, which was [lower than](#) wind farms at 44.9 percent, which is just below natural gas at 48.1 percent. That means that wind farms are providing energy just as often as comparable coal and gas plants. With another source of electricity that can be managed predictably, our electric grid is more reliable thanks to wind energy.

There are many other benefits to Minnesota windpower - just ask one of its [3,000](#) employees! Wind technician is the [second-fastest growing job](#) in America (beaten only by PV Solar Installers), and it's a great new career path for folks who want to earn a living in rural Minnesota. Many Minnesota community colleges like [Minnesota West](#) Community and Technical College provide wind technician training programs. Afterward, technicians can secure a job with no experience in Southern and Southwestern Minnesota starting around [\\$40,000 annually](#).

Wind energy is bolstering America's energy independence by providing a new source of low-cost, reliable energy to power our country. And, it's [creating new jobs](#), [new tax revenue](#), and [new economic development](#) across rural America - which invigorates our work force.

Wind energy. It's just smart.

Like to learn more about renewable energy? [Sign up for our monthly "Renewable Champions" newsletter](#) to get the latest stories and resources about the Midwest's transition to renewable energy.