

North Dakota Recognizes the Importance of Coal-Fueled Baseload Electricity

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Legislators in North Dakota are considering legislation that calls for a study of the state's future energy supply. We think the bill is a good idea. Frankly, other states should follow North Dakota's example.

The bill — SB 2314 — passed overwhelmingly in the state Senate and is waiting for the House to act. The bill demonstrates North Dakota's thoughtful approach to ensuring the state has not only a diverse energy supply — which is always a good idea — but a reliable energy supply — which is absolutely essential. After all, what good is it to have a diverse energy supply if you cannot depend on it 24/7?

There is no better source of baseload (available 24/7) electricity than coal. Coal is reliable and affordable. During winter, a dependable supply of electricity is a necessity for North Dakotans.

As we recently [wrote](#), coal-fueled power plants operate efficiently and reliably produce large amounts of electricity. That's why coal-fueled power plants are perfect for providing baseload electricity and why coal has an advantage over many other energy sources. For example, natural gas is usually available for power generation, but sometimes short-term demand for gas can outstrip supply, especially when you consider that most gas-fired power plants do not have long-term storage onsite to handle supply disruptions. By comparison, most coal-fueled plants have at least an 80-day supply of coal onsite. Renewable energy sources, like wind, are intermittent (not available 24/7) because the wind doesn't blow all the time.

The bill gained wide support after complaints that North Dakota policies unfairly favor wind energy over coal. Republican Senator Jessica Unruh, who also voted for the legislation, is a supporter of the bill because she believes "[I]t's time to level the playing field" for coal in the state. Many in the North Dakota energy industry might favor wind power over coal because of the generous tax breaks that are given to developers of wind projects, but this bill shows that state lawmakers are wise in recognizing that coal also has an important role in the state's energy future.