

Legislature Moves Forward with Regional Energy Study

Jun 19, 2008 by Elizabeth Ziegler



(KCPW News) Utah could be the breadbasket for domestic energy sources, says Representative Roger Barrus, co-chairman of the Natural Resources Interim Committee. The bicameral committee unanimously pledged its support Wednesday for a regional study to determine how best to develop Utah's energy resources.

"This study would take a look at all the energy resources we have in our state - whether they are renewable, whether they are fossil-based, whether they are for nuclear development - and then look at those at the standpoint of a cost-benefit analysis. As policymakers, where should we be focusing our time and attention?"

The study will cost about \$300,000, but will not require taxpayer money. Instead, it will be funded by one of a handful of think-tanks interested in the project, says Wesley Smith, a Park City energy consultant speaking on behalf of the Copenhagen Consensus Center of Denmark, which will facilitate the study. The five-month process of combing through documents on the economic and environmental cost of energy development in Utah will culminate with a two-day seminar hosted by the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics. Participants including legislators, state agencies, and federal representatives will hash out a list of priorities for the state. Environmental groups will be allowed to participate on an advisory committee. Smith says the Copenhagen Center's focus on transparency and inclusion will keep the outcome unbiased.

"You hear a lot about, well, we want to have an independent study done. And their approach, essentially, is more of a public choice theory approach, which is that no one is really independent. And the best thing you can hope for is that you have transparency. And that you create a process whereby, if there is disagreement on certain assumptions and data, you can have a challenge on those assumptions and data."

The vote of confidence from the committee was largely symbolic. Barrus says legislative leadership from both parties already approved the study.



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