

Legislation proposed to increase Illinois' chance to land FutureGen

State Senator Dale Righter (R-Mattoon) and State Representative Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet) joined Congressmen John Shimkus and Timothy Johnson at a press conference Tuesday to announce a measure designed to enhance Illinois' prospects

for landing the FutureGen project. "The FutureGen project has the potential to forever change the way electricity is generated, and Illinois has a chance at being a part of it," said Rose, who says the project would benefit not just Mat-

toon or Tuscola, the remaining site options in Illinois, but would assist the state economically and environmentally.

"Illinois residents would benefit from the outpouring of new job opportunities, while breathing cleaner air and relying less on foreign oil. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it is our job as lawmakers to do everything within our power to make it happen."

Righter explained that next year, the FutureGen Alliance plans to select one of four remaining sites in Illinois or Texas to build a state-of-the-art, near-zero-admissions, coal-fueled power plant that will produce energy from coal in a revolutionary manner. The \$1 billion facility will be the first of its kind and will produce more than 1,000 construction jobs, 150 permanent plant operation jobs, and hundreds more generated through new industries drawn to the area, all by 2012.

The preliminary sites in Illinois, Texas, and other states were judged in 43 categories using a comprehensive point system to determine whether each site is capable of hosting a power plant and its geology to store carbon dioxide emissions underground.



Photo by Scott Gower

Tuscola Mayor Dan Kleiss (center) welcomed several legislators to town Aug. 22 for a press conference regarding proposed legislation related to the FutureGen project. To the left is Congressman Tim Johnson and to the right is Congressman John Shimkus.

The four finalists were separated by less than five percentage points.

During the evaluation period, the state of Texas also enacted a statute indemnifying FutureGen for litigation that might arise concerning the process of carbon dioxide sequestration. In a collaborative effort, Sen. Righter and Rep. Rose are working with members of Congress, officials with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and local offi-

cial to push for companion legislation, Senate Bill 3190 and House Bill 5825, which will allow Illinois to provide legal defense for the FutureGen Alliance and those working for them with regards to the specific process of sequestering carbon dioxide underground.

"Illinois sites scored higher for geological features, but we need to continue to move forward and improve all aspects of our package," explained Righter. "The good news is

that there is not much Texas can do improve the geology of their sites, but we can do something about the areas where Texas has the edge. By proposing and hopefully passing this measure into state law, we will begin to level the playing field for Illinois and give Mattoon and Tuscola a fair shot at competing for this project, with respect to this particular aspect of the application."

Rose further explained that the indemnification

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Photo by Scott Gower

State Senator Dale Righter (left foreground) and Congressman John Shimkus (right foreground) go over information they would be discussing at a 1 p.m. press conference held at Tuscola City Hall Tuesday afternoon. In the background are, from left, TEDI executive director Brian Moody and State Rep. Chapin Rose.

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provision contained in their measure is very narrowly tailored to protect Illinois from picking up irrelevant legal expenses. "It is aimed directly at the sequestration process, which is the process of taking the carbon dioxide - a by-product from the coal burning - and pumping it into ground where it is stored in rock formations."

Phil Gonet, president of the Illinois Coal Association, applauded the lawmakers' efforts, saying it is appropriate that the state take on the responsibility of indemnification with regards to the project, and that this opportunity could lead to other opportunities for the State of Illinois.

"This is an amazing opportunity for the Illinois coal industry because it could easily lead to future projects of this nature, making Illinois a prototype for other plants," Gonet commented, adding that "Illinois has more recoverable coal energy beneath its borders than there is of oil content in Saudi Arabia and Quait combined."

Gary Butler of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) echoed Gonet's statements. "This bill has the potential to revive and further ignite the coal mine industry, and bring jobs back to Illinois. I want to thank Senator Righter and Representative Rose for demonstrating their strong leadership to move forward and secure the FutureGen project. The UMWA strongly supports their efforts."

The two lawmakers have reached out to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity as well as the governor's office for their cooperation in pushing this important measure to secure the FutureGen project.

"We need to band together and make this a bipartisan effort, and demonstrate to the FutureGen Alliance that Illinois is in fact where this plant belongs," Rose commented.

Righter added, "I want to thank the local DCEO officials as well as those stationed in Springfield for efforts thus far, and I look forward to working with them to help Illinois bring this project to fruition."