Keynote Speech by Secretary of State Bob Brown
"Wind Powering Montana" Conference
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When state officials first began calling Montana the "Treasure State" in 1895, they were paying tribute to our mineral wealth—the gold, silver, and copper that helped to build our cities. But the nickname is just as apt when applied to our energy resources. Because as the nation's energy needs have evolved over the past two centuries, Montana has consistently been able to meet them with her abundance of natural riches: timber to stoke our steamboats, coal to run our railroads, hydropower to light our homes, and oil and gas to warm them.

Now, as the nation seeks new alternatives to conventional energy sources, Montana is once again poised to play a valuable role.

Wind is the most promising of the existing energy alternatives. And wind, as any resident of the Hi-Line can tell you, is plentiful in Montana. In fact, wind is the world's fastest-growing source of energy. It's the most economically viable source of alternative energy. It's increasingly cost-competitive and, unlike coal or nuclear power, it can be sold as a value-added product. Last but not least, it's renewable and environmentally friendly.

During my 30 years of involvement in state government, I've learned many important lessons. One that seems especially pertinent here today I learned from my wise old friend Matt Himsl, a long-time Montana legislator. He used to say, "Never be the last in which the old has died nor the first in which the new is tried."

Certainly, we are not the first state to examine wind as an energy option. Several other states—Texas, California, Washington, Wyoming, and Minnesota among them—are already aggressively pursuing wind development. Yet Montana, which ranks fifth among the 50 states for wind energy potential, has yet to take advantage of this precious natural asset.
It's time for us to join the leading states in harnessing the wind. The rush is on! Let's not be the last wagon to head down the gusty trail.

In the next decade, the need for energy in Montana is expected to grow from about 1,800 megawatts a year to about 2,100 megawatts. Wind is no panacea; it will not and cannot supplant conventional energy sources in the foreseeable future. But it can serve us in at least four significant ways:

First, it can augment our existing power sources and help us to feed our growing appetite for energy—sort of like the dinner roll that complements our meat and potatoes.

Second, it can provide us with a new and profitable commodity that we can export to the rest of the nation.

Third, it can allow us to do our part in preserving the planet for the generations of tomorrow.

And fourth, it can enhance our security and self-sufficiency in these dangerous and uncertain times.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, we've all felt especially vulnerable and insecure. Our current power infrastructure is vulnerable, too.

It doesn't take a Tom Clancy novel to convince us that our pipelines and transmission lines, our electric substations and large centralized power plants, are potential targets for terrorists who want to throw our society and our economy into chaos.

And it doesn't take a rocket scientist to build a bomb that could cripple parts of our power grid and throw entire regions into darkness. The September issue of Popular Mechanics describes how to build just such a bomb and estimates that it could be done for no more than $400 and with no more technological know-how than we had in the 1940s.

We can gain some measure of security against such an unthinkable act by adding wind power to our energy portfolio. Our power supply is much less vulnerable to sabotage if it's decentralized and diversified. Wind farms tend to be smaller than conventional power facilities, and they can be disbursed across the landscape.

If a local community, like Lewistown, constructed a 10-megawatt wind plant on its outskirts, the facility could serve as a backup if the town's conventional energy sources were disrupted—whether it be by terrorists, ice storms, or toppling trees.

Because wind is ethereal, no one can cut off our supply. Because wind is free, inexhaustible, and available to all, no cartel can monopolize it and hold us hostage to sky-high prices.

As any broker will tell you, it makes good financial sense to diversify your stock portolio. The same advice holds true for Montana's energy portfolio. An investment in wind energy offers a hedge against the volatility of the conventional fuel market. It boosts our self-sufficiency and reduces our dependence on foreign oil.

Wind can also play a role in Montana's ongoing efforts to bolster its economy.
Have you ever stood in the aisle at the grocery store and watched someone grab a pint of Ben and Jerry's ice cream that sells for $3.50 when he could buy a whole half-gallon of Meadow Gold for the same price? Obviously, some other force besides economics is driving that decision. Just as some people are willing to pay more for "premium" ice cream, some are willing to pay a premium price for so-called "green" energy.

Wind offers us an opportunity to satisfy this niche market. And if we don't do it, some other state will.

Wind also presents a financial opportunity for our struggling farmers and ranchers.
In the Midwest, farmers who once cursed the gales that flattened their crops and scoured their fields are discovering that leasing their land for wind development is a whole lot more profitable than raising crops.

According to the New York Times, Minnesota farmers earn as much as $2,000 a year for every wind turbine they agree to have installed on their land.

These royalty payments can provide a stable supplement to a farmer's income, helping to counteract swings in commodity prices. Montana's agricultural community needs and deserves this same opportunity.

Developing our wind resource can also help our economy indirectly by broadcasting our concern for our environment. That concern projects a public image that will attract tourists and new businesses. And private wind development can provide an important source of tax revenue in rural communities whose economic futures look bleak.

As for the environmental benefits of wind power, those are as obvious as the wind is invisible. Wind creates no emissions that contribute to global warming or acid rain. The construction of wind farms has a minimal impact on the landscape. And if and when they're dismantled, they leave little sign of their existence.

By developing our wind resource, we can help to extend the lifetime of our supply of finite fossil fuels.

So how do we capitalize on the breezes that buffet our foothills and prairies? How do we turn our chinooks into winds of fortune? A good place to start is on the 5.2 million acres of state-owned school trust land that are spattered across Montana. Wind development on those lands has the added benefit of providing much-needed revenue for our Montana kids and classrooms.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) has estimated that 19 percent of Montana's trust lands have Class 4 or higher winds. If that resource were fully developed, NREL predicts, it would produce about 30,000 to 40,000 megawatts of power. That's about enough to meet the power deficit in California for the next decade.

As a member of the state Board of Land Commissioners, which oversees management of our school trust lands, I persuaded Montana legislators last spring to adopt a tax incentive for wind projects on trust land. Also at my urging, the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation recently issued a request for wind proposals on trust land. The department is now considering two potential projects.

The state can encourage wind energy in other ways, too. It can support a regional or national "green tag" market that allows the environmental benefits of wind to be sold separately from the power. It can begin to identify appropriate locations for wind development. It can streamline leasing arrangements for wind prospecting and construction on state lands. And it can keep an open mind about the viability of this unconventional energy source.

Montana has always been rich in the resources of nature. And Montana has always been generous in sharing those resources with the nation. A century ago, Montana copper from the "richest hill on earth" was used to make the wire that electrified America. Just as Montana

copper conducted the electrical power that modernized our nation, we now have identified a new jewel in our treasure chest. Let's not turn our backs on the winds of opportunity.