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# Hall: Texas has world-class clean energy potential

**Plentiful resources, beneficial plans and job generation render Texas a gold mine for clean energy investment**

By John Hall | February 18, 2016

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Around the world, Texas is known as an oil and gas juggernaut. Yet many people don't know Texas' clean energy potential far exceeds that of any other state - meaning we have a significant economic opportunity on our hands.

This month, the Solar Foundation released its State Solar Jobs Census, which ranked Texas sixth in the nation with a total of 7,030 solar jobs in 2015. That's great news, but judging the total number of jobs belies the full picture. In terms of jobs per capita, or in relation to the state's population, Texas was way farther down the list at number 34. When it comes to developing clean energy industries, we can - and should - be aiming a lot higher.

Fortunately, as a result of smart state policy and natural clean energy potential, Texas is in a uniquely advantaged position to do so.

During George W. Bush's tenure as Texas governor, state leaders laid the foundation for clean energy growth with two major decisions. The first involved an overhaul of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), the grid operator for about 90 percent of the state.

Under Bush's leadership, ERCOT

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OPINION

Then there's the sun. Despite unprecedented gains in 2015, Texas has barely begun to scratch the surface of its potential. Fortunately, solar is poised for explosive growth in the state - ERCOT forecasts more than a 50-fold growth by 2030.

Texas wind generation will continue to expand, too. Even better: These promising predictions are extremely conservative, as they were made prior to the extension of solar and wind tax credits by U.S. Congress in December 2015.

On top of a cleaner, more efficient grid, what does all of this potential and planned expansion mean? In a word: jobs.

Texas' thriving wind energy industry supports over 17,000 jobs. Compare that to less than 4,000 in the next-highest state, industrial-heavy Michigan.

Texas is no shrimp in solar jobs either, as evidenced by placing sixth in the Solar Foundation's census. But consider this: California has one-fourth of the solar potential of Texas - and 10 times as many jobs.

Furthermore, these numbers only cover renewables. There are many other clean energy avenues Texas should be exploring to grow our economy. More than any other state, Texas has greater potential to deploy energy efficiency and demand response, a voluntary tool that pays customers to conserve energy when the grid is stressed.

Additionally, the state is the nation's leader in combined heat and power (CHP), highly efficient power plants that typically use natural gas to generate electricity and useful heat at the same time.

As the Texas job market continues to suffer from an oil and gas market slump, state leaders cannot forfeit this economic opportunity. It's time they create jobs by prioritizing clean energy solutions.

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