

Sandlin: Wind energy producers want electricity mainstreamed

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It's no longer an alternative source of energy, she says

Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin and other U.S. House members heard testimony Thursday that wind energy resources should pair up with coal-fired plants to provide reliable sources of electricity for American consumers.

Herseth Sandlin (D-SD) had returned to Washington, D.C., this week after the Labor Day break with the Senate having to work on passage of the 2007 agriculture and energy bills. President Bush and Congress are also waiting for reports from U.S. commanders in Iraq about the status of the troop surge and progress in improving security in that country.

During a phone press conference, Herseth Sandlin described attending a wind energy forum in Howard and tours of the local Knight & Carver and Energy Maintenance Service plants. Knight & Carver builds and repairs windmill blades, and EMS maintains wind turbines. She said supporters of wind energy had stressed that the United States should move wind-generated electricity into the mainstream of the nation's energy system and no longer view it as an alternative energy source.

The House version of the energy bill would require investor-owned utilities to produce 15 percent of their total electricity from renewable source such as wind and solar power by 2022. It also contained funding for the development of alternative fuels and pro-

visions to support increased energy efficiency of appliances and buildings.

According to Herseth Sandlin, the three members of the South Dakota congressional delegation — herself and Sens. John Thune and Tim Johnson — met Wednesday after Johnson was welcomed back to the Senate to discuss legislative issues. Johnson was absent from Congress during the last eight months recovering from a brain hemorrhage. Herseth Sandlin said they exchanged views about many topics, including the Homestake underground science lab, 2007 Farm Bill, and Lewis & Clark and Mni Wiconi water projects.

Herseth Sandlin said of Johnson, "It appears to me that he's ready to get back to work."

When asked about how she would assess the reports that Gen. David Petraeus and Iraq Ambassador Ryan Crocker will deliver next week to Washington officials, Herseth Sandlin replied she would assess those reports with other testimony. The Government Accountability Office will submit a report on the Iraq government's progress and retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones will offer testimony on the U.S. military's efforts.

Herseth Sandlin said that she planned to speak on the floor of the House Thursday in favor of passage of the Native American Housing Bill. The bill would reauthorize block grants for American Indian and native Hawaiian programs that provide resources for the purchase, rehabilitation or management of affordable housing for low-income families.

The bill could provide \$2.2 billion in funding from 2008 to 2012.