

Dem scolds Barrasso over wind power

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CASPER, Wyo. - Effectively fighting for Wyoming's best interests in Washington, D.C., requires reaching across party lines on many issues, according to U.S. Senate candidate Nick Carter, a Democrat from Gillette.

Carter issued a press release this week charging incumbent Sen. John Barrasso with taking part in partisan politics that have so far prevented the extension of a tax credit for commercial wind energy production.

"Last week, Congress had the chance and they blew it," Carter said in a prepared statement. "It saddens me to see that our own members of the U.S. Senate haven't the foresight to see what wind energy can do for this country and for our home state of Wyoming."

Carter is competing against Keith Goodenough of Casper for the Democratic nomination for the Senate seat. Barrasso, a Republican, was appointed to the seat by Gov. Dave Freudenthal a year ago after the death of Sen. Craig Thomas. No other Republicans are running for the seat.

An emerging boom in wind energy development in Wyoming may be short-lived, according to local wind advocates. Although several wind farm projects are now under construction, new investment reportedly froze months ago because the production tax credit is set to expire at the end of the year.

In explaining why he voted against an energy bill that would have renewed a tax credit for commercial wind energy production, Barrasso said the Democratic leadership had muddled the bill with other provisions that were bad for Wyoming. He said provisions such as union mandates, a New York City transit project and others amounted to pork-barrel legislation.

Instead, Barrasso said he supports a Republican-sponsored renewable energy package known as the Clean Energy Tax Stimulus Act of 2008. It contains an extension of the wind energy tax incentive, and it has 43 other Senate co-sponsors, including 16 Democrats, according to Barrasso.

Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., is also a co-sponsor of the bill.

"Wyoming gets it right, and Washington gets it wrong," Barrasso said Tuesday. "The bipartisan bill that I have sponsored, along with 16 Democrats, that's the one that's a clean, bipartisan energy bill aimed at energy resources like wind in Wyoming."

Carter said state-level politicians in Wyoming often do get energy policy right, but the state doesn't see much when it comes to D.C. politics.

"When Wyoming really needs a piece of legislation like this wind energy tax credit, if all you've done is vote the party line then you don't have credibility," Carter said in a phone interview. "Barrasso doesn't have influence on a bill that probably does have several objectionable provisions."

Carter has campaigned to brand himself as bipartisan, often pointing out that his father was a Republican and his mother is a Democrat. He said sending a Democrat to the Senate would signal to Congress that Wyoming is serious about finding common ground.

In a statement issued this week, Carter said he "grew up with the lesson that you need to understand how to work with people if you ever want to get anything done."

Barrasso said that since taking office a year ago, he has worked every day to bring Wyoming's brand of bipartisanship to Washington.