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## **Report: States must cooperate on power lines**

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The Western electrical grid is woefully inadequate for future energy needs. And so far, efforts to beef up and modernize the grid are bogged in the myriad authorities shared by federal, state and local entities, a new report concludes.

"Transmission Siting in the Western United States," by the law firm Holland & Hart, examines the issue and urges a coordinated and rational approach to transmission among Western states -- particularly on matters of where to locate power lines.

"The bottom line is if Western states want to retain a significant role in siting transmission for renewable fuels, things have got to change or the feds will take over," said James Holtkamp, manager of Holland & Hart's global climate change practice.

Holtkamp wrote the report with Holland & Hart partner Mark Davidson. It was commissioned by the Western Interstate Energy Board, which is the energy arm of the Western Governors' Association.

At least seven major electrical transmission proposals would enable some 15,000 megawatts of new electrical generation in and around Wyoming, according to the Wyoming Infrastructure Authority. Much of the capacity is in anticipation of renewable energy.

But Holtkamp said the problem is getting renewable energy Wyoming's world-class wind, for example to urban markets. A Wyoming-to-California transmission line may be in the interest of those states, but what happens when a county in Utah doesn't want the power lines because its citizens get no benefit?

Holtkamp warned that there are already proposals in Congress to give the federal government broader authority on where to locate transmission lines in the West. The U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission does have regulatory authority over such interstate facilities. But Holtkamp said Western states might be better served to cooperate on such matters.

"If there's a federal oversight, there's a public process. But I'm not sure the interest of the stakeholders could be addressed as well," Holtkamp said. "We suggest states do a better job coordinating with the feds."

Some Western leaders welcome an active presence by the federal government. Gov. Dave Freudenthal's press secretary, Cara Eastwood, said he's not prepared to say the federal government should have overriding authority. But he supports the federal government as a leading partner with Western states.

"It's not exclusively a state decision or exclusively a federal decision," Eastwood said. "Ultimately, the federal government needs to have a way to make it work, and right now it's not working."

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