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Governor supports Milford valley as Utah's Renewable Energy Zone

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MILFORD — Monday marked the Milford Valley as Utah's designated Renewable Energy Zone by legislative joint resolution supported by Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., at the first renewable energy fair at Milford High School.

An estimated 600 people — adults and students — attended the event that featured Huntsman as the keynote speaker, an electric car race, exhibitions and demonstrations on the uses of alternative energy, in addition to a panel discussion that addressed the economics of renewables.

"We have an opportunity to become the best in class in the energy sector," said Huntsman. "We have the resources: land, sun, wind, geothermal and the brainpower with the commitment of our higher education institutions and places like Milford High School to train the next generation to be engineers for renewable energy."

Huntsman conducted a ceremonial bill signing for Senate Bills 188 and 76, and House Bill 430. House Bill 430 provides economic development incentives for alternative energy projects, and Senate Bill 76 creates the Utah Generated Renewable Energy Electricity Network Authority.

"I attended the first wind energy meeting about 10 years ago because it was thought possible back then to embark on alternative energy in the state but the meeting became disillusioned when it was discussed what was going on in other states, like Wyoming and Oregon, and the incentives those states had for clean energy businesses to do things there," said Mark Nelson, University of Utah Extension agent in Beaver County. "We knew then that Utah wouldn't have anything until it changed incentives, and that was about a decade ago, and it has taken us this long to finally have legislation in place, and so the governor signing that bill was what I was excited about."

Representatives of the Governor's Utah Renewable Energy Zone Task Force — comprised of 20 appointed members from utilities; renewable energy generation developers; environmental organizations; federal, state and local government representatives and energy advocate representatives — took a bus tour of First Wind's 203 megawatt wind corridor project, Raser Technologies geothermal plant and state Sen. Dennis Stowell's solar-powered home in Parowan in conclusion of the event.

The purpose of the task force is to promote the development of renewable energy resources to meet the goal of 20 percent of Utah's electricity by 2025. Exposure to what Milford can do for the state to achieve that benchmark inspired the event organization.

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