

Amodei: Green energy not worth higher electric bills

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., said this week that any “green energy” policy that leads to higher electric bills for Nevadans who are looking for work in tough economic times is the wrong energy policy for the state.

“Nobody is anti-green,” he said. “We struggle to compete with the cost of a kilowatt hour when we talk about economic development. And economic development has something to do with jobs.”

If federal money is going to be spent on research and development to make wind, solar and geothermal energy more competitive that’s one issue, Amodei said.

“But if those, when they get done, go to sell into the grid and that increases rates, especially right now when things are the way they are in Nevada, and competition for sustainable living wage jobs is what it is in the Inter-mountain West, I think that’s the wrong energy policy,” he said.

Nevada’s 2nd Congressional District representative made his comments to Sam Shad in an interview on the “Nevada NewsMakers” television program in response to recent comments from Sen. Harry Reid saying that NV Energy’s Reid Gardner coal plant in Clark County should be shut down. Reid has also urged NV Energy to support a \$5 billion solar project that a Chinese company ENN Mojave Energy, wants to build near Laughlin.

An NV Energy official told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* last week that the utility has no plans to purchase more renewable energy at this time because it has exceeded the state’s requirement that 15 percent of its portfolio originate from

green energy sources.

Amodei also questioned the effectiveness of federal financial support for green energy projects.

“If you go to the Department of Energy and you look in the last few years, they provided \$1.5 billion, Sam, \$1.5 billion in loan guarantees, to those projects in Nevada,” he said. “And while it’s great news for all the construction folks, I get that, in terms of the long-term jobs, it has created 137 long-term jobs throughout the state. That’s \$22 million a job, Sam, in loan guarantees.”

Amodei appeared to get his math wrong, however, with a closer estimate being \$11 million a job based on 137 jobs and loan guarantees of \$1.5 billion.

The Nevada Policy Research Institute last week released its own analysis of the renewable energy sector in Nevada and found that over \$1.3 billion in federal funds funneled into geothermal, solar and wind projects since 2009 has yielded and is projected to yield 288 permanent, full-time jobs, or \$4.6 million per job.

Amodei said Gov. Brian Sandoval could create more jobs in Nevada if given a \$1.5 billion bank to do so.

Reid was also successful several years ago in getting NV Energy to terminate the construction of a coal-fired plant near Ely in eastern Nevada. NV Energy announced in 2009 it was stopping work on the \$5 billion project. Two coal plants had been planned for the area by the utility.

Amodei said the project was able to meet all environmental and air quality requirements.

“These folks have complied with all of the objective regulations and permitting requirements, and you’ve got somebody (Reid) coming in, going, ‘forget about the rules, I’m

going to impose my will,' " Amodei said.