



## **Congress urged to invest more in alternative energy**

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By Faith Bremner

[Argus Leader Washington Bureau](#)

WASHINGTON - A coalition of 400 farm, conservation and energy groups pressed Congress on Wednesday to embrace a new plan that could lead to America getting 25 percent of its energy from clean, renewable sources by 2025.

Currently, only 6 percent of the nation's energy comes from renewable resources, and most of that is provided by hydropower generation. A plan unveiled by the 25X'25 Coalition calls on the federal government to spend an additional \$12.6 billion a year for the next five years to significantly increase energy conservation and the production of wind, solar, geothermal and biofuel energy.

The money, which the group says is roughly 5 percent of what Americans spent on imported oil in 2006, would be spent on things such as research, loan guarantees and tax incentives to spur the production and distribution of more renewable energy.

The plan also would boost rural economies in places such as Cascade County, Mont., where the Rocky Mountains meet the plains, sending great gusts of wind across the landscape, said Peggy Beltrone, a Cascade County commissioner and a member of the 25X'25 Coalition steering committee.

The plan would "take the great attributes of rural places like Cascade County and transform them into real solutions for our national and economic security," Beltrone said during a Capitol Hill news conference.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., one of only two active farmers in the Senate, said the plan would offer hope to farmers who are suffering from low crop and high energy prices.

"(The plan) gives us options to make our family farms more productive and profitable to pass on to our children," Tester said.

The plan would help the environment by reducing carbon emissions, which contribute to global warming, by 1 billion tons per year, supporters said. And it would reduce oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels a day.

Biofuels production would increase from about 5.1 billion gallons in 2006 to 86 billion gallons by 2025 under the plan. In his State of the Union speech in January, President Bush proposed increasing annual biofuels production to 35 billion gallons by 2017.

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