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Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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Governor Blagojevich announces two more states, national miners' union endorsements as rally caps FutureGen for Illinois campaign

State and local backers celebrate two-year effort, new support from West Virginia, Michigan and United Mine Workers of America

ARCOLA – The final days of the Illinois campaign for FutureGen began today as hundreds of area residents rallied to celebrate efforts by the Blagojevich Administration and the communities of Mattoon and Tuscola to secure the federal clean coal project.

As bands played and hundreds of supporters cheered, the crowd heard words of strong encouragement and gratitude for a job well done from United States Senator Dick Durbin and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity director Jack Lavin.

“We have assembled the strongest case possible for the selection of an Illinois site for FutureGen,” Governor Rod R. Blagojevich said of the two-year effort. “The people of Mattoon and Tuscola have shown the world why FutureGen belongs in Illinois.”

The case made by Illinois became even stronger with Gov. Blagojevich’s announcement that the national coalition supporting an Illinois site now includes the more than 20,000 members of the UMWA and union President Cecil Roberts, as well as West Virginia and Michigan.

Lavin, who made the announcements on the Governor’s behalf, also told the crowd at Arcola High School, “For two years we’ve stated the case as to why central Illinois has the best geology, infrastructure, research facilities and community support. Today is about thanking the people of Mattoon and Tuscola for their dedication to the effort.”

Elected officials, Tuscola and Mattoon community leaders and local residents demonstrated their support for the project at an old-time pep rally. It featured the Arcola High School drum line, Eastern Illinois University Jazz Ensemble and the Mattoon High School marching band. Santa Claus even made an appearance, passing out chunks of Illinois coal to participants.

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Support from West Virginia, Michigan and the UMWA adds to a growing number of significant endorsements for FutureGen in Illinois. Previously, the states of Wyoming, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin have expressed their support for Illinois' efforts. The coalition of states supporting Illinois represents three-fourths of the coal produced in the United States each year.

"Illinois fills the bill for FutureGen with superior geology and ample water resources. Moreover, Illinois is centrally located to bring coal from the nation's major producing regions to the FutureGen facility at the least cost to the project and to the environment," said Cecil Roberts, UMWA International President. "It is a simple matter, in our opinion. A coal project of this importance belongs in a coal state."

Governor Blagojevich, the Illinois Congressional delegation, and state and local partners across Illinois have been working for more than four years to bring the \$1.4 billion FutureGen project to Illinois.

Governor Blagojevich has committed to an aggressive investment package to secure the project, with \$17 million in direct grants from a clean coal technology fund; \$50 million set aside by the Illinois Finance Authority for below-market-rate loans; and an estimated \$15 million in sales tax exemptions on materials through local Enterprise Zones or the High Impact Business program.

FutureGen is designed to be the cleanest fossil fuel-fired power plant in the world. The facility will convert coal into hydrogen and electricity, while capturing and safely storing the carbon dioxide deep underground. It will lay the groundwork for developing similar plants around the country and the world, pioneering the capture, rather than release greenhouse gases. Illinois is a coal state whose geology will maximize the transferability of FutureGen's technology.

FutureGen will produce 275 megawatts of electric power, which is enough electricity to power 150,000 homes, as well as hydrogen for fuel cell technology that will serve as the next generation "battery" to operate everything from a computer to a car.

Members of the FutureGen Alliance represent the largest energy companies in the United States, plus major energy companies in Asia, Europe and Australia.

For more information on FutureGen, please visit www.FutureGenForIllinois.com.