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## **Illinois Senate passes bill to help land FutureGen plant**

KATE CLEMENTS

The Illinois Senate on Wednesday unanimously approved legislation to help Illinois land the \$1 billion FutureGen project.

FutureGen is a joint effort between the federal government and a consortium of private companies to build the world's cleanest power plant, with near-zero emissions. The project is expected to create 1,300 construction jobs, plus another 150 permanent jobs once the plant is up and running.

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Illinois is home to two of the four finalist sites: Mattoon and Tuscola. The other two are in Texas, a state that has already enacted legislation protecting FutureGen from certain kinds of lawsuits.

SB 1704, sponsored by state Sen. Gary Forby, D-Benton, and state Sen. Dale Righter, R-Mattoon, would offer similar protections here.

"What this bill does is compete with Texas," Forby said.

Brian Moody, executive director of Tuscola Economic Development, Inc., said he was pleased the bill passed the Senate.

"This bill goes a long way to give us a major item that the FutureGen Alliance needs," Moody said. "Texas already had this legislation, so it puts us on an even playing field."

Righter said the bill, which now heads to the House, is crucial to landing "a truly once-in-a-generation project."

"This plant not only creates hundreds of new permanent jobs, it also makes Illinois a leader in clean energy technology," he said.

Moody said he looks forward to seeing the bill proceed in the Illinois House in the upcoming weeks.

In a written statement, Gov. Rod Blagojevich said landing FutureGen continues to be a top priority.

"Not only does Illinois have the geology, infrastructure and a strong track record of developing clean coal technology, but we also have a dedicated group of bipartisan leaders in Springfield, as well as in Washington, that believe in FutureGen's tremendous possibilities for our state and our country," the governor said. "But we are leaving nothing to chance, which is why we are doing everything we can to bring this state-of-the-art facility to Illinois that will expand markets for our coal, protect our environment, make us more energy independent and put more people to work."

A final decision is expected later this year. For more information about the state's efforts to lure the project, visit [www.futuregenforillinois.com](http://www.futuregenforillinois.com).