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PERSPECTIVES

TOPICs

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Get off the PTC Rollercoaster

These days, renewable energy news seems dominated by reports of despair surrounding the pending PTC expiration and its negative effects on the wind market. Conversely, there are also hints of hope coming in the form of bipartisan support for a PTC extension which could keep the market strong. Rollercoaster media messages can leave us feeling dizzy about the future. Gathering information from those who are closest to the PTC and other issues is the best method for getting off the ride and gaining an understanding of the critical factors affecting the industry.

One such avenue for gaining insight is direct from our federal legislators. Attending AWEA's Capital Hill event in February ought to provide a forum for learning the latest developments in regard to the PTC. The attending industry stakeholders are clearly engaged in the issue and participating legislators typically provide candid feedback regarding their intentions to support or discourage the policy. Key questions are likely to be posed: Is a PTC extension even possible on its own merit? What's the chance of either scenario moving forward prior to the presidential election? It is hoped that these conversations will provide useful context to support our immediate experience within the wind industry, as well as long-range planning.

Photo Credit to http://iguide.travel/Washington,_D.C./Capitol_Hill

From our perspective, we continue to be very busy in the wind industry, assisting our clients with the development of projects slated for 2012 construction and beyond. Some of our clients tell us that they will build projects regardless of the PTC's existence. The current workload and upbeat attitude of those clients tends to push the PTC to the back of our minds; it becomes a problem for tomorrow. So we listen and wait, while we move on with our typical consulting challenges; balancing clients, projects, and resources.

Meanwhile, the media continues to present the PTC expiration issue in diametrically-opposed perspectives. High-profile news of industry downsizings and project terminations trigger a singular reaction of deep concern for the wind market. At the same time, a strong wind industry means more jobs. That fact resonates with Congress and has some industry professionals feeling optimistic that it could be enough to extend the credit.

The rollercoaster keeps going and the ups-and-downs are unsettling. The PTC may indeed be tomorrow's problem, but it is one that should be better understood and planned for today. I, for one, plan to get off the ride to hear the real discussions at AWEA's Capital Hill event and I expect to leave having the latest, most accurate information to help plan and prepare for our company's role in the industry.

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