Dave Heineman
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Catherine D. Lang, Commissioner
[illegible] Norfolk Ave., Ste 100 • Norfolk, NE [illegible]
Phone: [illegible] • www.dol.ne.[illegible]

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February 1, 2010

Senator Ben Nelson
Attn: Kate Howard
7602 Pacific St.
Suite 205
Omaha, NE 68114

Dear Senator Nelson,

I am writing this letter in support of the Renewable Energy program expansion at Northeast Community College (NECC). Northeast Community College currently has a one-year Wind Energy Technology program; however, a two-year associate degree is needed to prepare students for a safe and successful career. NECC is dedicated to augmenting other existing programs and developing new programs that will prepare students for employment in industries where we are working to reduce our carbon footprints.

The United States became the largest generator of wind power in the world, producing enough electricity to power more than 5 million homes in 2008 (Wind Energy for a New Era). In 2008, wind installations increased by an even larger rate (50% with 8,545 MW added) than they did in 2007 (45% with 5,249 MW added), bumping up wind power's five-year average annual growth rate (2004-2008) to 32%. The new wind projects installed in 2008 represent an investment of $17 billion – the largest capital investment in the U.S. electricity sector that year. Wind power is also a job creation dynamo, creating 35,000 jobs in 2008 alone despite the economic downturn and providing a broad range of business and employment opportunities in different regions of the country (Windpower outlook 2009).

The American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) currently ranks Nebraska sixth nationally for energy potential. Nebraska has 73 operational wind turbines with a total capacity of 152.88 megawatts (MW). According to a column in the Omaha World Herald, Nebraska Public Power District's Deal to Energize Wind Farm, a new agreement to construct an 80 MW wind farm will create more than 100 full-time jobs during the nine-month construction period, so one wind farm results in employment opportunities for existing electrical, construction, and heavy equipment occupations and creates new jobs, resulting in growth and economic development for Nebraska (Jordan, 2008), especially in rural areas that are in dire need of employment opportunities.

Please consider this letter of support for the expansion of renewable energy programs at Northeast Community College. It is critical that this project be successful and that training be available for students pursuing a career in renewable energy.

Sincerely,

Kendrick Marshall, Employment Security Manager
Nebraska Department of Labor-Norfolk

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