

# Wind turbine jobs blow in China's direction

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WASHINGTON – The rush to America of foreign wind-turbine manufacturers shows that the [Obama](#) administration's plan for stimulating the creation of green-energy jobs is going in an odd direction.

Two weeks ago, [U.S. Renewable Energy Group](#), led by Dallas investor Cappy McGarr, announced plans to build a \$1.5 billion wind energy farm in West Texas. About a third of the money would come from federal stimulus funds. All of the wind turbines (and much of the remaining investment capital) would come from China.

"We believe that this project will greatly contribute to job creation, the goals of the Obama administration and our desire to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and increase our energy independence," McGarr said in announcing the deal.

There would be perhaps 330 jobs created in Texas. Most would be temporary construction jobs. Meanwhile, thousands of Chinese workers in the northeastern industrial city Shenyang would build the labor-intensive turbines.

Most of the wind energy projects seeking money under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act rely on foreign-made turbines. Even the industry we have here at home, led by GE, is looking abroad. GE's technology will power the gearboxes of the turbines for the U.S. Renewable Energy Group. The gearboxes will be made in China.

U.S. companies emerging from the financial shocks of the last year haven't started investing in American factory jobs. Richard Fisher, president of the [Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas](#), told an Austin audience last week that the company CEOs he speaks with are more interested in investing abroad.

That doesn't fit with the administration's plans. To fix the big economic imbalances of the U.S. economy, administration economists say, Americans must save more, import less and sell more U.S. goods to the world. This is particularly important in the U.S. relationship with China, which is America's biggest creditor.

[Democrats](#), with union support, included a "Buy America" provision in the [stimulus bill](#). This hasn't proved to be an obstacle to moving ahead with wind projects that rely on foreign-made turbines.

When the wind is right, the U.S. Renewable project would generate more than 600 megawatts of electricity, or enough for 180,000 homes. Texas has long recognized such energy projects as a public good and provides incentives to support them.

Federal support has been more haphazard. Wind energy advocates say that's a reason other countries are taking the lead with alternative energy technologies developed in the United States.

President Barack Obama said the stimulus bill would create environmentally friendly manufacturing jobs in America. He's using the same rhetoric to promote legislation that would curb greenhouse gas emissions.

To get there, however, it now looks like we'll have to rely on foreign investors.

The engineering for the U.S. Renewable turbines was developed in Germany. Joachim Fuhrlander, CEO of this namesake company, says the West Texas project and others will eventually lead to service jobs for more than a thousand Americans.

[Denise Bode](#), president of the American Wind Energy Association, says other foreign manufacturers are moving plants to the United States to be nearer the world's biggest wind market.

In a roundabout way, those plants will create American jobs. That might be behind another wind farm announcement scheduled for Wednesday, this time by the Portuguese-owned firm Horizon Wind Energy.

Horizon says its latest investment "will create thousands of good-paying jobs on American soil."