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The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has organized a climate symposium on the challenges and opportunities of climate legislation in Nebraska this week. This event represents a unique opportunity for the state to start looking at energy, economy, and climate as interconnected issues that need an integrated policy response.

Economic growth depends on both energy resources and a hospitable climate. Energy policy developed without climate protection in mind is not sustainable. Climate protection policy without a companion energy policy will fail. Therefore, the next president and Congress need to pursue an agenda that integrates a program for economic, energy and climate security.

In Nebraska alone, climate legislation that promotes clean energy investments could produce nearly 86,000 more jobs, according to a recent study by the University of Massachusetts Political and Economic Research Institute (PERI). The benefits of those new jobs would spread to a much wider swath of the economy.

A second report by PERI predicts that if we invest \$100 billion into clean energy technologies — an amount comparable to the size of the April 2008 federal stimulus package dedicated to consumer rebates — nearly 13,000 new 'green jobs' would be created in Nebraska, and the unemployment rate would drop from 3.4% to 2.2% in two years.

We can generate the investment necessary to bring clean energy technologies to people with new policies that will simultaneously address our energy and climate concerns. A firm national limit on global warming pollution with an accompanying market that rewards smart companies for real reductions would do this. This legislation would also generate trillions of dollars in funds to invest in clean energy technology, energy efficiency, efficient vehicles, cleaner burning fuels, and create jobs at home while reducing our dependence on oil.

Nebraska has enormous clean energy resources that could be harnessed for energy production, including wind, solar and biomass. The state has the 4th largest amount of crop residue in the country and is ranked 6th in the nation in wind energy resources. Not only could Nebraska benefit from using clean energy such as wind power, but from manufacturing jobs for clean technologies like solar panels, wind turbines and insulation for energy efficient retrofits that could be marketed around the country, indeed, around the world.

Today, the largest portion of the state's labor force is employed in Nebraska's agriculture industry. This sector could benefit by the transition to cleaner burning fuels, such as

cellulosic ethanol. The ethanol boom in Nebraska showed that with real dedication and policy drivers, an entire industry can be created that will bring economic benefits to the state.

A series of multinational companies, energy utilities, non-profit groups and energy-intensive companies came out publicly last year in support of cap and trade legislation under a coalition called the United States Climate Action Partnership (USCAP). For these members, including GE, John Deere, DuPont, Dow Chemical, climate legislation represents an opportunity to expand an emerging market for the clean energy economy.

Discussions like those at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln provide a great opportunity for serious thinking about how to address our economic and environmental issues in a unified package.