

# TABLE of EXPERTS Series

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# ENERGY 2020 OUTLOOK

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ALBUQUERQUE BUSINESS FIRST AND RENEW MEXICO HOSTED A VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE OF LOCAL EXPERTS TO DISCUSS THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO'S ENERGY INDUSTRY.

RENEW MEXICO CO-FOUNDER BEN KELAHAAN MODERATED THE PANEL.

**BEN KELAHAAN:** My name is Ben Kelahan. I am a co-founder of ReNew Mexico. We are a grassroots voice of New Mexicans and their local communities on how renewable energy and transmission projects can benefit their local areas throughout New Mexico. We are super pleased to be now into our second year, and really happy to be supported by over 20 partners and organizations across the state – Chambers of Commerce, economic development corporations, civic and social justice, public health organizations that are both local and statewide. Really pleased to be here with the group.

**Missi Currier:** I am the president and CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Lee County. We are in southeastern New Mexico, located in Hobbs but serve all of Lea County.

**JOHN RYAN:** I am the executive director of the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project's New Mexico division. A little bit about my background: I was in the State Senate for 12 years, and prior to that, lived in Washington,

DC, working for our congressional delegation. I also had jobs that represented various energy industries, like the rural electric co-ops, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. I spent 15 years on the East Coast and moved back home, which is here in Albuquerque, back in 2000.

**JEREMY TURNER:** I am the director of New Mexico Project Development for Pattern Energy. I spent about six years at the New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority (NMRET), and five years with my own business. Pattern has a lot of work going on in the state, so we appreciate the opportunity to be here and talk through things, as I think Pattern will be one of the largest renewable developers in the state.

**KELAHAAN:** *To kick it off, I'd like to ask each of you to touch on the current state of New Mexico energy – renewable and otherwise.*

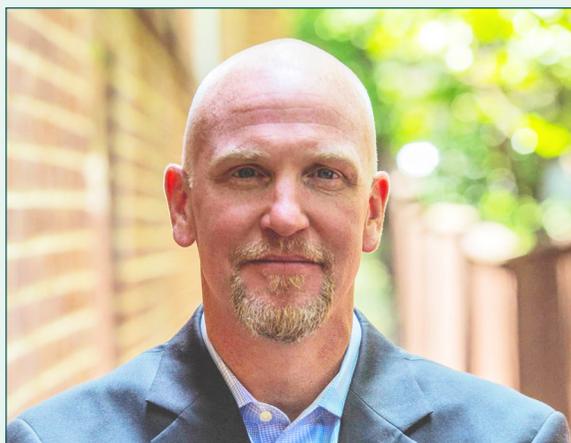
**TURNER:** Pattern [Energy] right now is investing in New Mexico. We are working on

a 1,050-megawatt project and afterwards another 3,000-megawatt project of wind development. We have about 544 megawatts already operating in the state. You've got Avangrid, which is doing a lot of work right now with their La Jolla and El Cabo projects. You've got Excel doing quite a bit. So, from a renewable standpoint, New Mexico is doing quite well despite the pandemic. There is a lot of construction going on. If you look at the counties where gross receipts taxes are up, even in a pandemic they are actually centered around where wind farms are being built.

**RYAN:** I'm really excited about our future in renewable energy. The big projects that will really capitalize on our potential here in New Mexico, as it relates to wind energy in particular, is the building of transmission. Without transmission, you don't get this wind farm energy to different markets, and Western markets are where SunZia plans to send any qualified generator that interconnects with us. Pattern Development is SunZia's primary customer on the first of two 500 kV

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## THE EXPERTS IN THE DISCUSSION



### Ben Kelahan

Ben is the Co-Founder of ReNew Mexico, a full-scale advocacy coalition supporting renewable energy and transmission project development in New Mexico. He has spent the last 25 years immersed in advocacy, grassroots organizing and coalition management. For the last 15 years, Ben has been working in communities across the country to bring the economic, employment and environmental benefits from renewable project development to municipalities, the business community and local residents. As a professional public outreach and organizing specialist, Ben's on-the-ground field experience includes engagements in over 45 states. He is a Co-Founder of RenUSA, a regional effort to bring renewable energy economic and transmission projects to the Western state region.



### Missi Currier

Missi Currier, PhD, is President and CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Lea County.

The EDCLC promotes and encourages business retention throughout Lea County, NM, known as the EnergyPlex. Lea County earned the moniker due to its diversified industries, including oil and gas, manufacturing, and renewable and alternative energies, as well as its capable, young, workforce. To learn more about the EnergyPlex and EDCLC please visit [www.edclc.org](http://www.edclc.org).

Currier's professional career has allowed her to focus on community development, governmental affairs, and communications across New Mexico and Texas, specifically focusing on the Permian Basin. She currently sits on the Board of Directors for the New Mexico Partnership, New Mexico Association of Commerce and Industry, and Texas Tech University National Alumni Board. She is a graduate of the 2019 Leadership New Mexico Connect class and is proudly involved in various community organizations. She attended Texas Tech University where she earned a PhD, MS and BS in agricultural communications. Missi and her family have lived in southeastern New Mexico for over seven generations.



### John Ryan

As the first Executive Director of SunZia New Mexico, John Ryan provides executive leadership and strategic direction to New Mexico operations and to the advancement of SunZia's state and federal agendas. Prior to joining MMR, John held a longstanding relationship with SunZia, serving as the firm's principal lobbyist for over ten years.

John has an accomplished record in federal and state government advocacy specializing in policy development, regulatory matters and building grassroots support. With a reputable career of over 30 years of combined service in Washington, D.C. and New Mexico, John has established an extensive public and private sector network.

On Capitol Hill during the late 80s and 90s, he began specializing in energy and appropriations policy development in the offices of the late Chairman of the Senate Energy Committee, Senator Pete Domenici and the late House Appropriations Cardinal, Congressman Joe Skeen.

Returning to his hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico, John Ryan was elected to the New Mexico State Senate in 2004. He was re-elected twice, serving a total 12 years. John was a well-respected Senator with a reputation of working both sides of the aisle to advance issues important to the state. He rose to become a Member of the Judiciary Committee and Ranking Member of the Conservation Committee



### Jeremy Turner

Jeremy Turner is the Director of NM Project Development for Pattern Energy. Prior to joining Pattern he was a Managing Partner with Forever Energy Consulting LLC, the Executive Director of the New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority and the Chief Financial Advisor for the New Mexico Finance Authority. Jeremy has 10 years of experience in the electric transmission industry and 20 years managing and structuring complex public and private financial transactions. He holds an MBA and Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics from New Mexico State University.



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transmission lines. Their Western Spirit transmission project is good catalyst and sets a high bar on how other transmission projects ought to be built, and to some extent, where they ought to be built. [These projects] take so long. We are 12 years into this thing, and still going. We still have maybe a year or year-and-a-half on permitting and a couple years of construction.

The political winds are behind us. Government is very supportive of renewable energy in New Mexico. And frankly, for that matter, the western states are really supportive of renewable energy as well. So the time is right. The timeline to get transmission lines approved is a hurdle for the renewable energy industry. Wind resources exist in areas where there are no transmission lines. But that is the state of play right now – they take a long time and are really expensive. A lot of projects that get started, do not get finished because it's difficult. It's really expensive.

**KELAHAN:** *Missi, what is your viewpoint on energy right now from Lea County?*

**CURRIER:** Lea County, as you might guess, has had a rough 2020 just like everybody else. Earlier this year – and people forget about this – the OPEC Plus deal between Russia and the Saudis caused US oil and gas production prices to plummet. That deal occurred even before COVID really hit the entire United States and the world. So, our region took a real hit to the chin. Quite frankly, it was a one-two-punch. Oil and gas prices are much lower than where any of us would expect or want it to be. We have had a lot of people laid off, and we have had a lot of businesses forced to close. We all know that oil and gas is cyclical, but we had no idea that we could hit as low as we have this year.

However, energy in Lea County is still strong. We are known as the EnergyPlex, because we are fortunate to enjoy renewables, oil and gas, nuclear, manufacturing, logistics companies, and a whole array of energy opportunities. So, quite frankly, our energy is endless. Yes, it will be wonderful when oil and gas bounces back, because it that has been one of our cornerstone industries for decades. We know it will remain a cornerstone. But, this is also an excellent opportunity for Lea County to continue to diversify, build on our renewable and manufacturing portfolios. This also allows us to continue to work with the state and

federal-level officials to find ways to further build out infrastructure to better support the energy resources that we have here in southeastern New Mexico and throughout the entire state.

**KELAHAN:** *All three of you mentioned the pandemic and how to manage that. I know that at ReNew Mexico, we have had to get quite creative in how we go about informing and educating New Mexicans about renewable energy and transmission projects. We are grassroots people by nature – typically knocking on everybody's door, having conversations with them on their front porch about how they feel about renewable energy and how it integrates into their lives and local communities. So we've had to find a lot of different communication techniques to reach those people. COVID has forced us to be resilient and diverse in how we go about doing that.*

*Could you elaborate more on the challenges COVID-19 presented for New Mexico's energy industry, particularly its workforce?*

**CURRIER:** Earlier this summer, the Economic Development Corporation of Lea County did a study to determine how much of Lea County's workforce is considered essential – “essential” as deemed by the state health orders. At a minimum, 60 percent of Lea County's workforce is considered essential. We are very proud of those numbers, because it really speaks to what we provide for the state, whether it is through agriculture, extractive industries, and other businesses who help keep the economy running.

Our workforce, just like everywhere, is hurting. The layoffs that we have seen throughout this region have been intense, and unfortunately, we don't see a lot of those jobs returning for a while. As for us, we have pivoted a lot in our organization. To your point, Ben, about communicating with our stakeholders – I would venture to guess that my Board of Directors thinks I send out too many emails, but what if the one email I don't send was the one piece of information that could have helped an individual or business? In the jobs that we are in, we take the betterment of our community and our residents' livelihoods personally. Economic Development is not just about the economics, it is also about the quality of life and the region. That is where we've really focused in the last couple of months - finding ways to

keep businesses open and help retain them throughout New Mexico.

Our mission statement at the EDCLC is twofold – not only to bring in business, but to retain business. And while we want to continue to diversify and bring in new opportunities to the region, right now our focus has been on helping people stay employed, helping people understand where we can continue to build within the economy to ensure that we keep moving forward with the workforce we have, and then also find new ways to bring new workforce in.

**TURNER:** From Pattern's standpoint, this has been a particularly challenging time. As I said, we have broken ground on 1050 megawatts of wind. In addition to that, we have broken ground on a 155-mile 345-kv transmission line that the NM Renewable Energy Transmission Authority owns and Pattern is the co-development partner. As we are actively working on projects right now and we've been monitoring our supply chain. It is because Pattern has projects going on all over the world that we have been able to manage that. We got in early during the pandemic, and worked with our suppliers and our vendors to ensure that we wouldn't have any delays in our construction efforts.

In terms of workforce, right now we are planning on bringing in 1,000 people for a construction crew to work on these projects over the next 14 months. In the pandemic, because so many people are out of work, it actually opened up an opportunity for us. We partnered with the Department of Workforce Solutions on a job fair recently, which was actually done in person with COVID-safe practices and proper social distancing. Only a handful of people at a time, but we were able to do it in person. We had over 40 people show up and apply for work on these projects, and we are still trying to attract more people. So while it has been difficult, I think we've been able to manage it.

Some of the difficulties though, on construction projects, include trying to live within the five-person limit for mass gatherings, which we are able to do but it has certainly changed our dynamics out in the field. Our construction crews, instead of meeting in a large group in the morning, are now meeting separately, and virtually in many instances just so that people are still tied together. It has been challenging but it

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has also created opportunities for us to really try and advance our efforts here and put New Mexicans back to work.

**KELAHAN:** *John, what has been the pandemic's impact with regard to SunZia, transmission, and some of the long-term projects you have been working on?*

**RYAN:** Well, me personally, I'm a back-slapping kind of guy. I would much rather be sitting with somebody and throwing a joke here or there... I prefer that, and I believe most people do. But there are some advantages of going virtual. You can be in meetings on the East Coast, you can capture people within your organization that are out of town. With some of the higher ups that are really busy, I can get them on zoom calls and we can have some really good conversations. So, in some instances, it has been a bit of an awakening and hopefully this kind of virtual stuff will continue.

On the other hand, we do so much outreach. We are engaging with the environmental community, landowners, government agencies and the general public... And each of those presents a bit of an issue if you can't meet in person, if people don't feel comfortable to meet, or if you can't meet in bigger groups. It slows down the process. So I think government needs to look at ways in which they can provide some exemptions, or at least some extensions, on performance measures that you're trying to meet, tax credits that need to be in place, or projects need to be in place by certain dates.

We have gotten a pretty good reception from government, especially on the federal side, that is allowing leeway and extensions to meet certain thresholds. That is helpful, but it just takes more time. We are handling it the best we can. I can't wait until I can slap somebody on the back again.

**KELAHAN:** *As a grassroots person, I also really value the ability to meet with people one-on-one. I know that with renewable energy projects and informing communities about them, nothing beats the rapport and the relationship building you can get face-to-face, starting with a handshake, looking eye-to-eye and then diving into an issue, establishing that credibility with folk. While I think we all miss that, we have also found unique ways to get our work done that we never thought were available to us. So*

*it's kind of a mixed bag.*

**Let's talk about the Energy Act of 2019. Clearly, it raised the profile and the state's energy portfolio standard for renewable and carbon-free energy. I want to get your perspectives on the future role of oil and gas given New Mexico's focus and potential in renewable energy. Missi, how do you see oil and gas working with renewable energy as the state moves forward?**

**CURRIER:** We appreciate that renewables and traditional fuels can all work together to provide opportunities for manufacturing for the comfort of a heated home – not only the comfort of a heated home, but a home that is affordable to heat. Those types of opportunities, to bring energy together, is something that we are very proud of in Lea County. Oil and gas is, like I mentioned earlier, certainly is a bedrock and cornerstone of what Lea County believes in. But Lea County also believes in smart production, production that contributes to the economy, and also the protection of the environment. Energy sources complementing each other not only help New Mexicans, but ultimately the world.

One of the things that we love to point out about oil and gas is that it can definitely be a friend and a complement to renewables. For example, you could not make a wind turbine without the byproducts for oil and gas. All of those energy sources coming together help us to have a very stable economy and help us to have a very comfortable living environment. We need oil and gas to remain a strong factor for our economy, because we enjoy the comforts that we have due to the oil and gas industry. But also we realize that for the sake of our environment, and the longer term future, we also need to look toward renewables. So, we very much want to focus on where we can go from here while still appreciating our heritage industries.

**RYAN:** That was well said, Missi. I love the “working together” between renewables and oil and gas, and especially in New Mexico. I've always wanted to promote New Mexico, whether it be oil and gas or renewables. I mean, these are infrastructure projects. These are projects that benefit our communities. They both make our communities stronger and bring tax dollars to our government and they should all be thriving. We should work together on making sure that each industry has the tools to survive and thrive.

The renewable and independent transmission side is a relatively new industry in New Mexico. But, just like oil and gas in the Permian Basin, the renewable wind energy potential in Central New Mexico is vast. It's waiting to be tapped. The transmission lines and focus on these areas to get the renewable power to market is really important.

We're just starting to take off, and we need to find ways to build these infrastructure projects faster, get through permitting and regulatory kinds of things with greater efficiency, so that we can get renewable energy to market sooner rather than later. New Mexico has the resources and the tools to be known for renewable energy in the same way the Permian basin is known as an oil and gas resource.

It's amazing that in addition to oil and gas, New Mexico has uranium, we have coal, we have wind, we have solar, we have a little bit of geothermal – we have it all. It's really good to be diversified like we are, able to take advantage of whenever a particular energy source is cheaper or more available or for whatever reason. Being diversified is a wonderful thing to have. And we have that here in New Mexico.

**KELAHAN:** *Missi, last year you issued a challenge to the audience at ABF's 2019 Energy Outlook event saying you had business cards ready and were prepared to talk to Albuquerque companies looking to expand their businesses to Lea County. How is that initiative coming?*

**CURRIER:** That challenge was a fun one and a challenge that I still offer up to Albuquerque and northern New Mexico businesses. I-40 does divide our state but that doesn't mean that the North just has to be the North and the South has to be the South. Business can and should work across the interstate. The more we can have working across that interstate, the more opportunities we have for all New Mexico residents. Last year, it was an awesome opportunity for us to be in Albuquerque and talk, especially with a lot of the homebuilders, about bringing their resources to southeastern New Mexico. John mentioned earlier some of the good points about COVID, such as allowing us to meet virtually. Another benefit is that it has allowed our region to take a deep breath and better prepare for when the upswing comes back. We are still working to expand

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housing opportunities. We still want to better train our workforce. We still want to create a regulatory environment that attracts and retain economic-based industry. So, while the demand has greatly decreased, the importance of having housing and workforce training has not. The challenge is still there, my contact information is still available. If I was with all of you right now, I'd pass my business cards out like candy. Lea County is still very much open for business, and we look forward to doing business with more folks throughout the state. We love to do business with New Mexicans and we certainly want that to continue.

**KELAHAN:** *Despite the challenges during this pandemic, everybody has been finding opportunities. One thing I think I've seen throughout is that people are taking the time to do some extra planning. There has been more idea-making in the process. And in some ways, that is going to serve some organizations and interests moving forward, because they've actually had an opportunity to breathe a little bit. It sounds like everybody is seizing the moment to do that and pull in some of that planning while they can.*

*In terms of New Mexico's energy potential, we have talked a lot about how limitless it is. Generally speaking, what barriers exist to meeting that potential?*

**TURNER:** New Mexico's energy potential from wind, solar, oil and gas really is limitless. We have tons of potential and we have a landmass that can support it. One of our biggest issues, and something that we could really use, is individuals and businesses supporting renewables and being more open to it. Transmission being the big one. If we really want to meet our energy potential, we need that. The other big one is from a legislative standpoint – ensuring that there is a stable business environment helps substantially in advancing development.

But the real barrier for renewables is transmission. Without transmission, New Mexico's opportunity to build and expand on our renewables is pretty limited. We need SunZia, we need Western Spirit. Those are two projects that are necessary in order to advance the state. The Renewable Energy Transmission Authority just finished another study looking at transmission that is needed over the next 10 years. It mentions Western spirit and it mentions SunZia, but it also

*“We need oil and gas to remain a strong factor for our economy, because we enjoy the comforts that we have due to the oil and gas industry. But also we realize that for the sake of our environment, and the longer term future, we also need to look toward renewables.”*

mentions a number of other projects that are needed in order for New Mexico to really benefit and meet its true potential. We really do need the transmission – that's one of the biggest barriers to getting anything done.

**RYAN:** SunZia is a transformational kind of project. It will put New Mexico in the top tier of states for selling wind when we're completed and the wind is interconnected to our project. That being said, it has been 12 years of permitting, studying, evaluating, and going through the regulatory process to get these permits to work with landowners and with the agencies. We have spent over 100 million dollars of at-risk capital today, and not everybody can do that.

I'm fortunate to work for a company based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, called MMR Group. They're a construction company with a specialty in electrical and instrumentation and they have staying power. They've opened offices here, and they have some other construction projects they're working on in the renewable energy sector. They are also working in the Permian Basin. That being said, the barriers are not what you think. It

isn't necessarily the regulatory process, or the length of the National Environmental Policy Act process – The barriers that exist are found in the amount of time each step of the process takes at the federal, state and even county levels, as well as the cost to the private sector. The process is needed to weed out ineffective project proposals but it is also preventing the companies that are making changes to protect the environment from implementing those needed programs. Transmission is the hardest part of the entire system: wind energy, to the transmission, to the customer. The transmission part is just really difficult. We need some wins on projects like SunZia in New Mexico. If we don't, we're not going to get additional customers looking at and investing in New Mexico. They need to see success in our state and they need to see that we are business friendly to this industry, and I think we can do it. Being business friendly and environmentally friendly are not mutually exclusive like some organizations will lead you to believe. SunZia is environmentally friendly and is working with New Mexico entities so the whole state can be successful as a result of our project. Look at where those benefits are... They benefit the rural communities, they benefit the state as a whole. But in some cases, you have small pockets of people that will never like them, they don't want to see them. And that's what we have to get over. We have to look at these projects holistically, evaluate them and judge them based on their benefit to the bigger community, to our state, to the region, to the country, and to climate change in general.

**TURNER:** To highlight some of the things that John's talking about here on economic benefits... The Broadview Grady project, which Pattern has already invested in, results in about \$1.6 billion of economic development in that community. For the project that we are working on right now – the Western Spirit projects – we are financing about another \$2 billion.

Pattern is finishing up an economic study as to what that will mean in terms of direct benefits to the state. Pattern has about 5,000 megawatts operating worldwide and we are attempting to build 4,000 more megawatts here in the state of New Mexico – almost doubling the size of our company. We are investing around \$8 billion total between all of these projects.

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**Broadview Project by Pattern Energy in Curry County, New Mexico.**

Photo Credit: Pattern Energy

But one of the biggest barriers to doing that is that lack of transmission. We want to make sure that we are doing the right things in opening up New Mexico's potential to really expand on these infrastructure projects.

**KELAHAN:** *That is really important to share because I don't think a lot of people really understand the length of time some of these projects take.*

**What can businesses and individuals do to help speed up that timeline?**

**CURRIER:** Often, in New Mexico, businesses complain about the regulatory environment at the local and state levels. For example, "this permitting process is taking too long" or "these expectations are unreasonable." Businesses and the entities that support them must do a better job of expressing specifically where the regulatory issues are and how they could best be addressed. We know that there are regulatory concerns, but we, as business, don't collectively tell the regulating entities

where the issues are and why they continue to create a backlog in business operations. Another issue is the ever-changing regulatory environment. For many industries, it is like the goal post is constantly moving.

We have a lot of trade organizations that do a good job of expressing some of the concerns about the regulatory environment, but we all are moving in so many different directions and need so many different things. It is not always easy to create a system that benefits all business at the right time, with whatever pace they need to be moving. We, as industry, need to do a better job of collectively working together to help our regulators understand what is needed to help business grow in New Mexico.

Building off of that as well, it's an opportunity for the state to invest further in infrastructure projects, which include broadband and other needed improvements that will attract larger businesses to the region. There is a lot of talk right now in economic development around onshoring and reshoring. There is no reason

that New Mexico shouldn't be absolutely primed for opportunities like that. We have a ton of land, we have a ton of resources, and we don't have places that are completely stuffed full of people. All of those things really position New Mexico to be a state in the coming years that is looked to for those onshoring and reshoring opportunities. If we, as industry, work together to create an even more business-friendly environment, it could literally be a situation where if we build it, they will come. New Mexico could be very primed for that opportunity to happen.

**RYAN:** We started SunZia back in 2008, and that was well before there was a real push in New Mexico to develop our wind potential and well before the Energy Transition Act. As I mentioned earlier, the timeline to get transmission lines approved is a hurdle for the renewable energy industry. The "us versus them" mentality of other critical infrastructure projects has pitted industry and environment against one another. Early

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in the project, we faced the same battle. Because we've been working at this for so long, over the past several years, we've taken different approaches with the environmental community. Meeting with them frequently, talking to them about the technical aspects of how we're going to build our transmission line, and ways to do it in a way that are much more friendly to the environment. Where we cross the river, how we cross the river, how we get beyond some of the migratory bird paths, what kinds of technologies are out there with regard to saving birds from contacting the lines – all that has been really good. We have a great dialogue with the environmental groups; the national, state, and even some of the local groups that are directly invested. And I think that's going to be a best practice for how to build future infrastructure projects while engaging the environmental community early in the process, getting their buy in, listening to them, and adapting where we can, providing understanding about our process and learning more about their insights. We want this project to be done in an environmentally friendly way. And it can be done.

**TURNER:** I think having folks embrace this transition to renewables, along with our existing energy, is necessary. Without that, it becomes more difficult. But on the regulatory side of things, to Missi's point, we have got to be able to do the right things but also make them a priority. When a project is there and ready to be built, it has to be made a priority at all levels of industry, business, and the government, so that they can be built in a timely manner. The death of almost all infrastructure projects is time.

**KELAHAN:** *I'll add a comment or two on that myself. In our first year at ReNew Mexico, informing the state residents about the benefits of these types of projects to their local communities, to their economy, to jobs, public health, and the climate... Jeremy, you used the word "embrace." As we've done this outreach, that's what we have found. The state really does embrace the direction of where we're going with renewable energy and transmission. We have been fortunate enough to now call our advocates in the thousands because of that reason. And it's because organizations like you have done the homework and the hard work of getting out there, talking with communities,*

*answering their questions, and informing them about these projects and what they mean to the local community. So as we've reached out to them, they've already had a very strong base of knowledge around it. Industry has been helpful. Public policymakers in the state have been helpful in establishing that base, along with some of the local organizations, like [EDCLC]. But it's also those voices that make it a priority when there's others considering putting some additional burdens in the way, or anything else that might stall the effort to move energy the right direction in New Mexico. So it's definitely important for those businesses and individuals throughout the state to be a part of the process. As we move into another Legislative session, is there anything that the energy sector has on the table for 2021?*

**CURRIER:** One of the focuses that we have on the legislative session are not only the shorter-term opportunities, but longer-term economic opportunities for the state. This isn't necessarily only focused on energy. One of the things that we're looking at very closely is more local control for LEDA (Local Economic Development Act), to ensure that communities can best use their LEDA dollars to re-incentivize retail and other business opportunities local level. We also want to look very closely at the Job Training Incentives Program (JTIP), to ensure that JTIP allows training opportunities for those interested in getting jobs in economic-based industries, including renewables and oil and gas. We certainly do not want one sector or one business to take up all of the JTIP money, but we know how quickly jobs are increasing in all sectors of energy, and we want to be able to take advantage of that. Also finding new incentives for businesses that might be interested in moving into the state. I once had a conversation with a gentleman who said, "We shouldn't compare ourselves to Texas when it comes to energy jobs..." We should absolutely compare ourselves to Texas when it comes to energy jobs, because it allows us to ensure that our incentives are lining up with what other states are offering. We do have to compete with other states to ensure that those businesses come to our region. It's not just about incentives, it's not just about regulatory. It's about ensuring that we can create a package that is just as attractive...or more...as other states will provide. With that in mind, our

focus will be on invigorating local business in the shorter-term, but also creating pathways for businesses to look to move to New Mexico for the longer-term.

**RYAN:** I believe there will be a lot of focus on the state budget. In large part, maybe some of that gets solved by the federal government through distributing more CARES Act money to the state and local levels. But absent that, they are looking for money under every rock. That is something that scares us a little bit, frankly. In part because the renewable and wind energy in New Mexico is just getting started, and to arbitrarily slap a tax on wind or try and extract money from projects that haven't been built yet is the wrong way to be looking at this. In fact, I think they ought to be looking more at, like Missi said, incentives. If you want to create an industry, you have to get them here, you have to compete, you have to incentivize. I can't tell you exactly what incentive bills we will support that will grow the industry. There are also a few that are looking to either change the way the industry is regulated, other discussions are focused on taxing the industry – those kinds of things would be killers. I think they are appropriate at some point when the industry gets really robust, but right now, they are much premature. We ought to be looking for creative, innovative ways that other states are incentivizing their industries, and implement them here in our state.

**KELAHAN:** *I'm hearing a theme of making sure the state stays competitive. On the tax burden front, from ReNew's grassroots base throughout the state, it gets a very strong response in terms of thousands of folks wondering if there is going to be an additional tax. It limits the way New Mexico can meet its energy future. There is a pretty strong response to it. So I can speak to that a little bit in our experience as well. I have one last question for everybody on the panel. If you were back here in another year, what are the energy issues you think we would be talking about? Would they be very similar? Or how would they be different?*

**TURNER:** A year from now, I'm looking forward to being able to come back and say that New Mexico now hosts the single largest wind farm in the United States. That's what we are working on now. Barring anything that would change that, our goal is to have that

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**Broadview Project by Pattern Energy in Curry County, New Mexico.**

Photo Credit: Pattern Energy

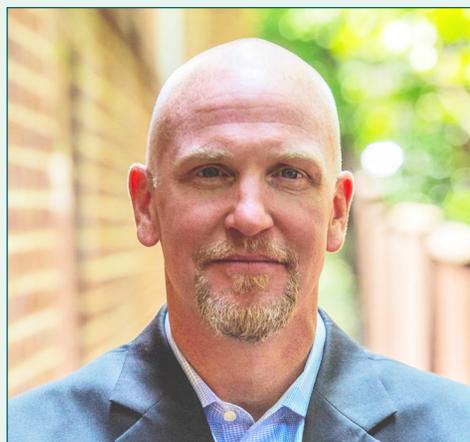
in service by the end of next year. I'd like to come back and say that things are on track, we've built 1,050 megawatts of wind. In addition to that, Avangrid has their next phase up and running, and the Sagamore project is built.

I think on the solar front, New Mexico has equal opportunities and potential. I'm hopeful based on some of what the utilities have planned that you'll see a build out of more solar as well.

**RYAN:** We have a really productive atmosphere right now within our legislature, governor, congressional delegation, and people responsible for helping move this industry forward. There is a lot of synergy. We've got a lot of interest and support. But I don't want us to pat ourselves on the back too soon and forget that the hard part is actually building the stuff that you need to make the goals, identified in the Energy Transition Act, a reality. Hopefully in this and future sessions, our state government will focus on how to implement these really tough and important carbon goals and clean air goals. And building the projects that can make that happen. I hope that's what we're still talking about next year.

**CURRIER:** Well, selfishly, I hope that I am able to name at least 10 to 12 Albuquerque companies that have headquartered themselves in Lea County. But if that doesn't happen, we want business to continue to expand into Lea County from all parts of New Mexico and other states. I very much hope both Jeremy and John are 100 percent correct about protection for our environment, ensuring our vast energy resources continue to grow in potential, and that our infrastructure continues to be built out. I hope that our conversation is a little bit more positive in regard to ensuring that people are back at work. I hope that not only nationally, but at the state level, there might be less political discourse that will help us to move forward in finding ways to stay positive and create a better economic environment. And I very much hope that we can meet in person because we are hopefully past this virus.

**RYAN:** Oh, I forgot to mention – world peace.



ReNew Mexico is honored to serve as presenting sponsor for the 2020 Energy Outlook Table of Experts, as leaders from across our state came together, if only virtually, to share positive news about New Mexico’s potential, and successful energy future.

ReNew Mexico is a community coalition, bringing organizations, businesspeople, public officials and residents who are passionate about creating a renewable energy future in New Mexico together to collaboratively make renewable energy development a reality for our state.

We are a grassroots organization by nature, typically knocking on doors and having conversations on front porches to learn how New Mexicans feel about renewable energy and how it integrates into their lives and local communities. COVID-19 has forced us to be resilient and diverse in how we go about doing that, but the line of conversation remains open, and we’re encouraged that New Mexicans have embraced our state’s potential and positive outlook for future renewable energy generation and transmission.

Now in our second year, ReNew Mexico is happy to be supported by more than 20 partners and organizations across the state, including Chambers of Commerce, economic development corporations, civic and social justice entities, and public health organizations, both local and statewide.

Despite the challenges this pandemic has presented, we are all working to continue finding opportunities for a prosperous future. I am personally encouraged to hear the hard work, innovation and planning that each entity shared during this roundtable. We are all finding unique ways to advance our energy future, based on New Mexico values, and in some cases in ways we never thought were available to us.

Heading into 2021, there is much hard work, innovation and optimism still ahead and I applaud the efforts of these roundtable participants, our partners and communities across the state for your voice and your role in moving our economic and environmental future forward.

Sincerely,  
**Ben Kelahan**  
*Co-Founder, ReNew Mexico*

*Thank you to our partners!*

