

John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau

"Regulatory certainty in the state of Kansas"

The old saying the only thing certain in life is death and taxes could be expanded in today's world. This saying should include government regulations.

For farmers and ranchers, the very nature of working with land, water and livestock means there's a certain amount of government oversight. It comes with the territory.

That said, farmers and ranchers believe such government regulation must be clear, stable and transparent. Something they can count on. Something as reliable as the Kansas wind.

When it comes to environmental regulations on the farm or in the workplace, farmers, ranchers and businesses believe such stipulations should be managed within a proven, structural framework with public input.

That's why agriculture has thrown its support behind a comprehensive energy plan being worked in the Kansas Legislature. This plan would include regulatory stability.

There are plenty of reasons to support such legislation. Most importantly, it will provide stability to the regulatory environment. Kansas businesses, including agriculture, should not be unfairly burdened with more stringent rules and regulations than the federal government demands.

After last year's decision by Kansas Department of Health and Environment to deny construction permits for a pair of coal-fired power plants in southwestern Kansas, it's time to bring clarity back to the way our state does business. To deny construction permits for this pair of electricity generating plants because of potential carbon-dioxide emissions was wrong. In this instance, neither state nor federal regulations list CO2 as a pollutant.

"Denial of those permits was uncalled for and should not be allowed to stand," Kansas Farm Bureau lobbyist Brad Harrelson said. "When you have action taken by a state agency that exceeds its authority, then we become a state where our laws no longer apply."

Last year's Kansas Department of Health and Environment decision to deny the air permit not only denies our state the expansion of much needed electricity generation and increased revenues, it sets a terrible precedent for economic development in Kansas.

KDHE exceeded its authority, and Kansans are concerned about what arbitrary decisions could be next. Such decisions could very well impact agriculture.

Farmers and ranchers could benefit tremendously from this new energy source, Harrelson said. They could fire their irrigation engines and run their operations more economically.

Construction of such a plant also would lead to economic development in a part of the state desperate for jobs, income and business.

"Kansas is in the throes of a very deep recession like the rest of our country," said Sen. Steve Morris, who represents the 39th District. "For our state to ignore nearly \$4 billion in

economic development and 2,400 jobs during the seven-year construction period is beyond me."

Morris believes the Kansas Legislature will support a balanced, comprehensive energy plan.

"It's important to move forward with clean-coal technology, nuclear, gas, geo-thermal, solar and wind energy," the Kansas Senate president said. "Our country has the coal resources to last for several hundred years."

In addition to an economic shot in the arm, regulatory certainty is key to help attracting new jobs to our state. Concerns about the uncertainty of our state's regulatory environment have been echoed by independent businesses, manufacturers, agriculture producers and other stakeholders from Scammon to St. Francis, from Rolla to Reserve and all points in between. Not to mention those outside our state's borders who ever thought of doing business in Kansas.

All Kansans should continue to seek clarification on this issue and support an energy policy that environmentally is responsible and promotes a viable economic solution to Kansas' needs. To do so will invite new businesses to Kansas, and allow current businesses to expand by giving employers the stability of regulation that is uniform and consistently applied.

John Schlageck, born and raised in northwest Kansas, is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.