



http://www.southernminn.com/owatonna_peoples_press/opinion/guest_columns/article_8b748607-0be4-5d41-a1c7-2da09f16cbc6.html

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR: Creating jobs and driving innovation in rural Minnesota

Updated Dec 15, 2016



Back in 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the grand opening of Ever Cat's biodiesel plant in Isanti. The company, started by a feed-supplement supplier for farmers, uses innovative technology to create biodiesel from waste. And every year since its opening, that plant has produced approximately three million gallons of diesel fuel to help fuel our cars, trucks, and ships. And it's employed more than two dozen people to do it.

That's just one example of a Minnesota biofuel company that is helping strengthen our economy while decreasing our dependence on foreign oil. Claremont's Al-Corn Ethanol is moving forward with plans for a new plant capable of processing about 47 million bushels of corn per year. Chippewa Falls Energy in Benson, one of the first farmer-owned, ethanol-producing companies in the state, celebrated twenty years of business this year. And Highwater Ethanol in Lamberton is doing its part to cultivate the next generation by teaching high school students how the ethanol and agriculture industries positively impact the state and country.

Across Minnesota, our twenty ethanol plants and three biodiesel plants generate roughly \$5 billion in combined economic output and have made our state the fourth-largest ethanol producing state in the country. These companies create good jobs and strengthen local economies across our rural communities. A recent study by ABF Economics showed that the ethanol industry generated \$7.37 billion in gross sales in 2015 for Minnesota businesses and \$1.6 billion in income for Minnesota households. The ethanol industry also supports over 18,000 full-time jobs in Minnesota.

That's why I've fought for the expansion of renewable fuels through a strong Renewable Fuel Standard – or RFS, as it is also known. The RFS requires transportation fuel sold in the United States to contain a minimum volume of renewable fuels.

Last October, I held a bipartisan meeting with 13 of my Senate colleagues, as well as White House Chief of Staff and Minnesota native Denis McDonough, to push for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase that minimum volume of renewable fuels. And when the proposed rule that the EPA announced earlier this year did not meet our expectations, Republican Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa and I led a group of Senators urging the Administration to get the program back on track.

Our efforts produced good news for corn and soybean farmers and thousands of people who work in biofuels in Minnesota. Right before Thanksgiving, the Administration released a stronger final rule for 2017. The new standard will require a record amount of biofuel – 19.28 billion gallons – to be mixed into our transportation fuel supply next year. It increases the minimum volume for conventional renewable fuel – like corn ethanol – to 15 billion gallons, hitting the congressional target for the first time. And the required volume of biomass-based diesel is two billion gallons. That's twice as high as the congressional target.

The Renewable Fuel Standard has helped create American jobs, drive innovation and boost local economies across Minnesota. And a stronger RFS will build on this progress. More good jobs, stronger local economies, less dependence on foreign oil – It's a win-win-win for Minnesota.

Amy Klobuchar is the senior U.S. Senator from the state of Minnesota.

