

Floor Statement of Rep. John Garamendi
Safe Climate Caucus
July 16, 2013

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the critical natural resources this country has the ability to harness in order to help combat harmful carbon emissions and rapid climate change. As the world supply of oil dwindles and our public safety is threatened by climate change, it is vital that we combine innovative technologies and abundant natural resources to employ clean energy. One of these abundant natural sources of power can be found in geothermal energy – and although it is often overlooked, geothermal has the ability to become one of our most important sources of clean energy moving forward.

Geothermal energy uses heat that the earth produces and stores to provide a consistent and reliable source of power at all times of the day and year. Geothermal energy is emissions-free, environmentally-friendly, and sustainable. Dry steam and flash geothermal plants emit just 5% of the carbon dioxide and less than 1% of the nitrous oxide of a traditional fossil fuel plant; binary geothermal installations emissions are near zero. More importantly, geothermal energy is cost-effective – over the last two decades, the cost of generating geothermal power has decreased by 25%. Additionally, geothermal energy can be produced domestically, adding to our country's fuel diversity and our energy security.

The largest geothermal installation in the world, which is located in Lake, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties in California, provides energy for over 1.1 million people throughout the northern portion of the state. A recent study estimates that the public benefits from geothermal energy produced in California and Nevada alone are worth more than \$117 million annually. In this region, geothermal energy has proven itself as a job creator and a positive contributor to the local economy.

Lake and Sonoma counties received over \$11 million in tax revenue in one year directly from The Geysers Geothermal field. Lake County has saved millions of dollars in disposal costs by funneling 8 million gallons of wastewater per day back into geothermal wells that then generate electricity. In the future, the possibility of harnessing valuable minerals during the geothermal process could also have a large economic impact in the region.

It is clear that California is in a unique position to capitalize on this clean and abundant resource – our state has the potential to harness over 4,000 megawatts of additional power from geothermal energy using current technologies. Geothermal, and other sources of clean energy, must become an integral part of a robust renewable energy portfolio for California and the country moving forward.