

San Jose Mercury News: Silicon Beat

*November 28, 2012*

Veterans from California flew to DC Wednesday for a high-profile push to get Congress to extend the wind industry's production tax credit, or PTC, which is due to expire at the end of this year.

Forty veterans from around the country joined Sen. Mark Udall (D-CO), Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA) and Rep. Steve King (R-IA) at a press conference urging Congress to extend the PTC. Many of the veterans have found post-military careers in the wind industry.

"The production tax credit for wind is working and should be part of the effort in Washington to help get more Americans – and more veterans – working," said Sen. Grassley in a statement.

The PTC pays wind power developers 2.2 cents per kilowatt-hour, and is seen as a vital tool for attracting investment. But future projects have ground to a halt because the credit is crucial to making windpower cost-competitive with other energy sources like natural gas. Denmark-based Vestas, which makes wind turbines, has already trimmed its U.S. workforce by roughly 20 percent due to on-again, off-again U.S. policy about clean energy.

"If the PTC isn't extended you'll see very little, if any, development in 2013," said Steve Stengel, director of communications for NextEra, during a spring event celebrating the repowering of the Altamont Pass. "That is a fact."

In California, the vast majority of wind turbines are clustered in three regions: the Altamont Pass between Livermore and Tracy, Tehachapi near Bakersfield and the San Geronio Pass near Palm Springs. Solano County is now home to several wind projects as well.