

H O N O R A B L E M E N T I O N

# RENEWABLE ENERGY FEDERALISM

by Danielle Stokes

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No one seriously questions that an improved and decarbonized energy supply system is a key component of climate change mitigation, but the United States' system of federalism complicates the siting of utility-scale renewable energy facilities. The Joseph Biden Administration presents the United States with an opportunity to reimagine how this country regulates renewable energy siting, allowing for substantial national progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, primary siting authority for renewable energy projects rests with state and local governments, which generally exercise that authority through zoning and land use planning, while the federal government approves certain interstate energy delivery systems. This fragmented system of gov-

ernance can delay and even deter project development, simultaneously thwarting the optimal logic in developing a national renewable energy generation system. Proactive renewable energy project planning offers one potentially effective—and constitutional—solution to this renewable energy federalism dilemma, particularly in conjunction with negotiated siting guidelines and a centralized siting agency. Drawing upon the substantial body of scholarly work that advocates for federal or regional collaboration in renewable energy policymaking and for more balanced and dynamic federalism in the energy sector, this Article further advances those goals while also shifting the focal axis and underscoring renewable energy as the locus for expanding energy federalism and mitigating climate change.

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*Editors' Note: This abstract is adapted from Danielle Stokes, Renewable Energy Federalism, 106 MINN. L. REV. 1757 (2022), and used with permission.*