

The Honorable Senator Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

November 19, 2009

Dear Senators:

A Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) is an essential tool to create clean energy jobs, enhance energy security, and reduce pollution. If designed properly, it will create new jobs, stimulate the economy, and make the U.S. a global leader in the clean energy economy. A strong RES will also enable us to meet requirements for reducing global warming emissions quickly and cost-effectively. In order to realize these benefits and create a stable market for renewable energy, it is critical that compliance with the RES be limited to truly renewable energy sources and not thrown open to include conventional sources of energy like nuclear power and natural gas.

Renewable technologies currently make up a relatively small portion of our electricity supply, while natural gas and nuclear already account for over 40 percent of electricity generation. The primary objective of a national RES is to diversify our nation's electricity mix and create a stable market for new, alternative energy sources like onshore and offshore wind, solar, sustainable biomass and geothermal. Through requiring diversity, an RES makes our economy more resilient to potential energy supply shortages or interruptions, price spikes, price increases or price manipulation that result from an over-reliance on just a handful of fuels. In turn, this protects consumers from volatile energy prices and saves them money over time as less demand for natural gas results in lower prices for gas and electricity.

In addition to diluting the energy security and consumer benefits of an RES, including natural gas and nuclear energy would blunt the market signal necessary to spark large scale investment in renewable energy manufacturing and deployment. America is competing for renewable energy manufacturing jobs with 37 other countries, including China, that have firm *renewable* electricity commitments in place. In fact, China has set a target to develop 100 gigawatts of wind energy by 2020. We can't afford to lose this new global race. In order to expand capacity for manufacturing wind turbines, solar panels, and other renewable energy equipment here in the U.S., we need to demonstrate that the U.S. is committed to creating a growing market for renewable energy.

In addition to manufacturing, the benefits for rural communities would be especially diluted if natural gas or nuclear energy were included in a national RES. Renewable energy would create jobs in rural areas where facilities would be located. Development would provide income for farmers, ranchers and other rural landowners who produce biomass energy and/or lease their land to renewable energy developers.

Electricity produced from nuclear energy and natural gas may produce fewer global warming emissions than coal. However, both are mature technologies with an established role in our electricity generation mix. Including them in the current Senate RES legislation will come at the expense of diversifying energy sources and make it more difficult for the U.S. to regain our global leadership in renewable energy technology. We urge you to oppose any efforts to weaken the current Senate RES legislation by adding natural gas, nuclear energy, or any other non-renewable energy source to the definition of renewable energy. Moreover, we urge you to ensure that any final standard includes strong near-term and long-term targets, which are absolutely critical for the U.S. to be a global leader in renewable energy.

Sincerely,

1Sky
American Wind Energy Association
Audubon
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Rural Affairs
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture)
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Water Action
Climate & Energy Project of The Land Institute
Climate Solutions
Conservation Law Foundation
Earthjustice
Environment America
Environmental Law and Policy Center
Fresh Energy
Greenpeace
League of Conservation Voters
Michigan Environmental Council
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Pennsylvania Interfaith Climate Change Campaign
Pew Environment Group
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Public Citizen
Public Policy Virginia, Inc.
Safe Climate Campaign
Sierra Club

Solar Energy Industries Association
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Western Organization of Resource Councils
The Wilderness Society
Union of Concerned Scientists
Vote Solar