

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

March __, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
The United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

In his first address to Congress, President Obama called on the United States to increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources, transmit this carbon-free energy to all Americans and avoid catastrophic climate change. The President specifically highlighted the pivotal role to be played by solar energy technologies in meeting this challenge.

Solar energy is affordable, carbon-free, and available in every region of our country. It is an economic engine that currently supports more than 70,000 well-paying jobs. Every megawatt of solar (enough power for 150 homes) that is manufactured and installed in the U.S. directly employs more than twenty four people for a year. Solar manufacturing, installation and system-operation employs more Americans per unit of energy than any other energy source. Thanks to recent Congressional leadership, the solar industry is expected to create an additional 60,000 jobs across the entire economy, install a gigawatt of solar power and avoid more than 1 million tons of carbon emissions in 2009 alone. These figures will more than double in 2010.

Notwithstanding this tremendous potential, solar satisfies only a small percentage of America's energy needs. For the country to meet its renewable energy goals, combat global warming and wean ourselves from over-dependence on foreign energy sources, the U.S. must fully harness solar energy's potential. With the right support from Congress, solar can meet America's energy challenges of today and tomorrow. In the coming months, we look forward to working with you to pass the following legislation:

- Ambitious federal renewable portfolio standards (RPS) that will deploy solar energy in all of its forms (photovoltaics, solar hot water, utility-scale). Such legislation must hold harmless more ambitious state RPS programs that demand a higher percentage of electricity to come from renewable sources or requires a different mix of sources. Federal RPS legislation should act as the floor, not the ceiling, for our nation's renewable energy goals;
- Strong climate safeguards that will cap carbon emissions while growing our economy and deploying unprecedented amounts of solar generating assets. Solar energy must be a dominant feature in any cap and trade system if we are going to realize the goals of job growth and construction of zero-carbon electricity assets. To this end, allowances, new

entrant set-asides, auction revenues and other dominant features in the legislation should be designed to deploy solar assets; and

- Improvements to our transmission grid – Green Power Superhighways – that will connect solar-rich areas with electricity customers. An electric power grid that is tailored to move solar electricity to where it is needed will enhance our energy security and speed our transition to a clean energy future.

As we have seen around the globe and in states throughout our country, the continued growth of renewable energy, and especially solar, depends on the right combination of public policies. This is no less true at the federal level.

We look forward to working with you to build on our recent achievements. Together we can do more in the 111th Congress than has been done in history to realize a clean, renewable energy future.

Sincerely,

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator