

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 16, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Hart Senate Office Building 522
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid,

As a diverse group of Senators representing all corners of America, we – the Freshmen Democratic Class - believe that America's current energy policy is untenable and that the Senate must take action this year to move our country forward. Recent tragedies in the Gulf and West Virginia have highlighted that we pay a heavy price for our dependence on fossil fuels. While fossil fuels are and will continue to be an important part of our economy, we believe the transition to a clean energy economy – one that includes an all-of-the-above approach – is an economic, national security and environmental priority.

We believe that meaningful reform will have several key components. First, we believe the scale of this challenge dictates the need for a comprehensive solution that includes making polluters pay through a price on greenhouse gas emissions. This will help us provide market certainty and help keep pace with China, India and other countries that are moving aggressively to promote clean energy industries. This legislation should also provide tax incentives, grants, loans and other assistance to help American manufacturers create jobs, cut their energy consumption, retool for a clean energy economy and remain competitive in the global market. It should provide support for job training programs and recognize the important role that rural and agricultural communities will play in a transition to a clean energy/low carbon economy.

Second, we believe successful energy reform legislation must provide targeted incentives for investments in energy efficiency throughout the American economy. Investing in energy efficiency represents the fastest, cheapest way to cut energy use, reduce carbon pollution and lower monthly energy bills. Energy legislation should include short-term and long-term programs to lower energy bills for American families and businesses, boost job creation, and jump-start the market for energy-efficient technologies.

Third, we believe America's long-term energy strategy must include meaningful investments in clean energy technologies to create more diversified and sustainable American power. Comprehensive energy legislation should include a federal renewable electricity standard (RES) that results in a meaningful increase in renewable energy production, as well as incentives for other types of clean energy technologies for electric power generation.

Finally, energy legislation should establish a clear target for reducing our oil dependence from countries outside North America, and invest in programs such as electric vehicle deployment, alternative transportation fuels, and expanded use of rail transportation to help meet the goal. However, this transition won't happen overnight and responsible development of domestic oil and gas reserves will continue to play an important role in our nation's energy portfolio as we move towards cleaner and more sustainable fuels. In light of recent events, and as we continue

to utilize our domestic reserves, it is essential that we ensure that any future oil and natural gas development is safe and environmentally responsible.

We are committed to a clean energy economy that creates jobs, strengthens national security, and reduces pollution. We know this transition presents challenges on many fronts, but the costs of inaction are too great. While each of us has individual priorities and concerns for our states and regions, we believe that the framework outlined above should guide energy legislation on the floor this year. We see the great potential for our states and our nation to benefit if we enact comprehensive energy legislation this year. We refuse to be the generation of leaders who posterity will view as those who failed to act.

Sincerely,

Mark Udall

Jeanne Shaheen

Tom Udall

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Mark Begich

Roland W. Burris

Tim Kauter

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Mark R. Warner

Wm F. Royce

Al Franken

Kay R. Hagan