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Media Contacts:

Whit Clay

212-446-1864

wclay@sloanepr.com

Anna Soellner

Center for American Progress Action Fund

202-492-2967

Asoellner@americanprogressaction.org

Clean Energy Infrastructure & Reducing Dependence on Oil Key to Economic Growth and Recovery Leaders Conclude

"National Clean Energy Project: Building the New Economy" Forum Proposes Principles for Energy Policy in the U.S.; Builds Momentum towards Clean Energy Legislation

Washington, DC, Monday, February 23, 2009 -- Major leaders from government, business, labor and non-governmental organizations agreed today on four key recommendations to reform U.S. energy policy. These principles would boost new renewable energy production, transmission and distribution and reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil. These leaders included Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, energy executive T. Boone Pickens, Center for American Progress Action Fund President John Podesta, and Vice President Al Gore among others.

The key principles include:

- A national clean energy infrastructure is essential to drive economic recovery, create good jobs, increase national security, reduce oil use, and protect the global environment.
- A regional planning process can speed the siting and construction of new transmission lines that can deliver solar, wind, and geothermal electricity to meet growing demand for energy to power growth.
- "Smart grid" technology and distributed generation of renewable energy can increase the transmission efficiency, and provide new information and tools to consumers to reduce their energy use, save money on energy bills, and cut global warming pollution.
- Investments in new infrastructure to support clean domestic alternative transportation fuels, such as natural gas and advanced bio fuels, will cut America's dependence on oil and reduce global warming pollution.

Forum participants offered the following comments after the discussion in the National Clean Energy Project:

“Developing clean renewable energy is a matter of economic and national security, making the discussion we had today important for Nevada and the nation,” said Reid, who served as the event’s Honorary Chair. “Many of the stakeholders who play a key role in this movement were in the room today including elected officials, cabinet members, and leaders in industry, labor and the environment. I look forward to our continued partnership to change our nation’s energy policy in a way that creates jobs, protects consumers and the environment and provides reliable power that meets our growing needs.”

“President Obama put us on the right path with a recovery package that creates jobs through clean energy investments. The plan has unprecedented resources for efficiency, solar and wind power, clean domestic alternative transportation fuels, and a 21st century electricity grid infrastructure. Mapping the next steps to wire the U.S. for progress is what this day was all about,” said John Podesta, President of the Center for American Progress Action Fund. “Broad support for transmission and other infrastructure policies will enable businesses and government to make investments that create good jobs, boost economic growth, reduce energy use, and protect the Earth.”

“If we are serious about reducing our foreign oil dependency, we have to use clean domestic alternative transportation fuels such as natural gas and invest to transform power generation, distribution and transmission of renewable energy and focus on efficiency. These have to be the cornerstones of a new national energy policy,” said Mr. Pickens. “The National Clean Energy Project is a historic gathering of a group of leaders from across government, business, labor and the policy community and we are united in a commitment to developing a new national energy policy and to getting this job done. Now is the time to act on the momentum generated today and move forward with energy legislation that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, create economic growth and make our nation safer.”

“The time has come to rethink and remake our energy future. That means building a new electric transmission system that is capable of bringing the power of renewable energy resources to American consumers, from the solar power of our southwestern deserts to the winds of the high plains to the geothermal resources of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific northwest,” said Interior Secretary Salazar. “Today’s gathering will help us assemble some of the best ideas for bringing our electric grid into the 21st century and for building the clean energy economy that we need.”

“It’s clear from today’s meeting that there is a growing consensus about the need to transform the way we use and produce energy,” Energy Secretary Chu said. “Starting with the investments in the President’s Recovery plan, and building on many of the good ideas discussed today, we can create millions of new jobs, free ourselves from the grip of foreign oil, and address the global climate crisis.”

The participants in events during the day included:

- President Bill Clinton
- Vice President Al Gore
- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Honorary Chair
- Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
- Senator Tim Wirth, U.N. Foundation President, Moderator
- U.S. Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar
- U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu
- Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol Browner
- T. Boone Pickens, Chairman and Founder, BP Capital Management
- John Podesta, President and CEO Center for American Progress Action Fund
- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Chair Byron Dorgan (D-ND)
- House Select Committee on Energy Independence & Global Warming Chair Ed Markey (D-MA)
- Acting Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Jon Wellinghoff
- Former Governor George Pataki (R-NY)
- Lee Scott, Executive Committee Chairman, Board of Directors, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
- Mike Morris, Chairman, President and CEO, American Electric Power
- Michael Thaman, Chairman and CEO, Owens Corning
- Denise Bode, CEO, American Wind Energy Association
- Fred Butler, President, National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners
- Rick Fedrizzi, President and CEO, U.S. Green Building Council
- Van Jones, Founder and President, Green For All
- Robert Kennedy, Jr., Chairman, Waterkeeper Alliance and Senior Attorney, NRDC
- Carl Pope, CEO, Sierra Club
- Nat Simons, Sea Change Foundation
- Andy Stern, President, Service Employees International Union
- John J. Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO
- Rose McKinney James, Energy Foundation Board

The 28 participants were together at the "National Clean Energy Project: Building the New Economy" Forum in Washington, DC today. It included remarks to the panelists from President Bill Clinton, former U.S. Senator and United Nations Foundation President Timothy Wirth, Honorary Chairman of the event, Senator Reid, Vice President Al Gore, as well as by business leader and clean energy advocate T. Boone Pickens and Center for American Progress Action Fund President John Podesta.

These speakers touched on key themes of the forum, including overcoming clean energy infrastructure challenges, and reducing America's dependence on foreign oil. The roundtable discussion among the invited participants, moderated by Mr. Wirth, focused on guiding the transformation of our nation's energy policies as essential to economic recovery and job creation.

There was a focus on:

- modernizing the electricity grid to increase capacity for wind and solar power;
- integrating energy efficiency, distributed renewable generation, and “smart grid” technology into operation and regulation of our electricity system; and,
- reducing our nation’s dependence on foreign oil through natural gas, advanced bio fuels, plug-in hybrid cars and advanced batteries.

About the National Clean Energy Project

Today’s event was convened by the Center for American Progress Action Fund. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was Honorary Chair. The forum grew out of the National Clean Energy Summit convened in 2008 by Sen. Reid, the Center for American Progress Action Fund, and the University Nevada Las Vegas. Today’s forum focused on modernizing and expanding the electricity grid, integrating energy efficiency and distributed generation into operation and regulation, rapidly increasing transmission capacity for renewable energy and reducing our nation’s dependence on foreign oil by using clean domestic alternative transportation fuels.

A video of the event and other information available at: www.nationalcleanenergyproject.org

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