

Accurate Measurement & Verification Services, Agrosil Energy, Alabama Environmental Council, Babcock & Brown, Barham Farms Inc., BioResources Management Inc., Chesapeake for Change, Celebrity Dairy, Collins Chick Farm, Comprehensive Forestry Services Inc., DeWitt Law PLLC, East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition, Eco-Systems Inc., Ecological Leasing Services, EMJ Corporation, Florida Renewable Energy Producers Association, FLS Energy, GreenStar Energy LLC, Helios Southern Energy Corporation, Louisiana Green Fuels LLC, Matrix Advanced Technologies, Mesa Power Group LLC, NC Conservation Network, NC Professional Loggers Association, NC Woodlands, Oklahoma City Community College, On Earth Energy Group LLC, Palmetto Bio-Energy LLC, Public Policy Virginia Inc., SC Forestry Association, SCM Americas - Wind Power, Signal Wind Energy LLC, Soenso Energy, Solar Tech South LLC, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE), Sun One Energy LLC, Sun Power Systems LLC, Sustainable Living Design, Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light, TerraShares, The SC Corporation for Economic Opportunity, TimberCorp Inc., Watershed Capital, Whitson Lumber Company, Wood Ranch and Renewable Resources.

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 23, 2009

Dear Madame Speaker:

We are renewable energy business owners, farmers, forest owners, academics, conservation advocates, and economic development agents writing in support of a robust national Renewable Electricity Standard (RES). We strongly support the goals of a national RES – to diversify our nation’s energy supply and increase our economic competitiveness and energy independence. Additionally, in the Southern states, we support the RES as a means to boost the rural economy while reducing pollution from coal. However, an RES that does little to advance the generation of renewable energy beyond business-as-usual will not meet these goals.

While some of us are generally hesitant to recommend government intervention, we also recognize that government support for new industries has proven needed and successful in the past as seen in the petroleum, automotive, aerospace, biotechnology, and telecommunications industries. We recognize that the RES mandate is for the common good, aiming to shift investments for the purpose of providing affordable, reliable, domestic, clean electricity.

For these reasons, we are appreciative of the monumental efforts that have been made in House and Senate committees to include an RES in the energy legislation that is before the Congress. However, after reviewing the Combined Efficiency and Renewable Energy Standard (CERES) provision in the American Clean Energy and Security Act, we believe that the current proposal fails to drive material expansion of the market for renewable electricity and will miss the opportunity to create hundreds of thousands of clean energy jobs and save consumers money on their electric and natural gas bills.

The initial draft Waxman-Markey bill would have required 25% renewables by 2025, a feasible goal laid out by President Obama. That has now been weakened to require a minimum of 12% with up to an additional 8% from efficiency, with many service areas exempted. An analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) suggests the weakened CERES would create no additional renewable energy beyond the 9.9% that is predicted by the Energy Information Agency if we just left things as they are.

This overall weakening fails to deliver a clear signal to investors and developers that America is open for business in renewable energies. A recent Pew Charitable Trusts report found that jobs directly related to renewable electricity grew by 23 percent between 1998 and 2007. In addition, a new University of California at Berkeley study finds that continuing on a business-as-usual energy path actually risks greater economic insecurity, while aggressive acceleration of clean energy assures faster and more sustained economic growth.

In the Southern region, we are aware that two of our abundant native resources – wind power and biomass electricity – are already cost-competitive with new coal-fired and nuclear power plants. The American Wind Energy Association estimates that the weak standards in the CERES could fail to deliver 100,000 jobs for the wind industry alone, driving manufacturing investment to other countries. Data from University of Florida research on biomass electricity suggest income and economic recirculation in the hundreds of millions of dollars and jobs numbering in the tens of thousands, most of which will go unfulfilled with the CERES.

From this we conclude that if Congress fails to pass a robust RES, the Southeast will miss the greater jobs and localized economic returns of clean energy technologies. We cannot support a weak RES that fails to deliver on the promise of creating green jobs, boosting the economy, and saving consumers money.

Our proposal is to significantly strengthen the RES to a 30% combined energy efficiency and renewable energy standard by 2020. The improved standard would require a 17% renewable and 10% efficiency requirement by 2020, and allow an additional 3% of the standard to be met by either renewable energy or efficiency at each state's discretion.

Our organizations stand ready to work with Chairmen Waxman and Markey and the House and Senate leadership to strengthen and improve these bills so that they fulfill the promise of the historic opportunity before us. The U.S. can emerge from this process

with legislation that effectively spurs clean economic development and powers our nation with efficient, renewable, home-grown energy sources. Given a chance, American innovation and ingenuity can lead us into long-term and broadly shared economic prosperity.

We will work tirelessly to accomplish that goal.

Sincerely,

Michael Churchman, Alabama Environmental Council (AEC), Executive Director, Birmingham, AL

Fitzroy Beckford, University of Florida, Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Agent, Ft. Myers, FL

Robert Cole, County Commissioner with Santa Rosa County, Milton, FL

Michael Dobson, Florida Renewable Energy Producers Association (FREPA), President, Tallahassee, FL

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