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“Clean Energy Jobs, Climate-Related Policies & Economic Growth – State & Local Views”

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Madame Chair, thank you for this opportunity to provide our perspective on how the State of Colorado’s “New Energy Economy” is creating jobs, attracting business and leading America toward a more secure energy future. I thank the Committee and its Subcommittee for the time and thoughtful consideration you are giving to the issue of how clean-energy and climate-change policies can offer tangible economic and job opportunities. In this time of great distress, I strongly believe that the path back to economic growth and prosperity must involve remaking America’s energy and climate policies.

First, a bit of history. In the 1880s, the CF&I Steel Mill was Colorado’s largest employer. Forming rails for the expanding frontier of the West, CF&I employed generations of Coloradans in the Southern Colorado community of Pueblo – at one time consuming half of all of the coal excavated in the state to power the production of rails.

The promise of work in the mines and mills brought immigrants from around the country and the globe to the West. Italians, Croatians, Slovenians, Mexicans, Germans, Greeks, Japanese, Hispanic-Americans, African-Americans and many more came to the coal camps and company towns of CF&I. The workers brought their wives and children, creating some of the most diverse communities of the Western frontier.

In 1990, after over a century of production, the CF&I steel mill declared bankruptcy and devastated Pueblo. Ever since, the descendants of those first immigrants have been struggling to recover from the economic impact of the mill’s closure.

Almost exactly a year ago, I was in Pueblo to make an announcement: We are bringing steel jobs back to Pueblo. It isn’t a rail yard, but it will be lynchpin in the renewal of Colorado’s manufacturing sector. Vestas, one of the world’s largest wind turbine producers, is going to build the largest wind tower manufacturing plant on Earth here in the United States – in Pueblo. One of the many factors in Vestas’ decision to locate in this proud community was Pueblo’s deep history and culture of steel manufacturing.

Today, manufacturing is just one part of what we call the New Energy Economy, and this New Energy Economy is creating a new Western frontier. A new generation is pursuing professional opportunities in the emerging industries of renewable energy generation and energy efficiency. That same entrepreneurial spirit of Western independence and innovation that brought pioneers to the mountains and plains of Colorado is alive in a new wave of entrepreneurs, manufacturers and tradesmen. They are installing solar panels, insulating houses, building wind turbines, retrofitting buildings to consume less electricity, and reducing our dependence on energy from foreign regimes.

In Colorado, companies are turning conventional hybrids into plug-in vehicles that get 100 mpg. Companies are fueling biomass boilers in a school with woodchips made from beetle kill trees.

And one emerging business is making a flexible thin-film photovoltaic solar material that originated in the space program.

In addition to its wind tower plant in Pueblo, Vestas also is producing wind blades at a manufacturing facility in the Northern Colorado community of Windsor, and is building another blade plant and a nacelle factory in the metro Denver city of Brighton. In all, Vestas will employ nearly 2,500 people in its four Colorado facilities, which represent a \$700 million capital investment in Colorado's economy. This is one company, in one sector of the growing New Energy Economy.

People want to be a part of this growing field. They recognize change isn't just coming -- change is here, and they want to be a part of it. Vestas received 4,000 applications for its first 400 jobs. And this was before the recession hit. Even today, amid the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the New Energy Economy is a bright spot, a beacon of encouraging economic activity producing a steady stream of new jobs and new opportunities.

Quite clearly, Colorado is now a global leader in the New Energy Economy, which is one very likely reason Colorado's unemployment rate is nearly 2 full points below the national average and lower than the rate in 31 other states. Our success, in a short period of time, is a testament to strong leadership, sound policies and effective legislation. And Coloradans are eager for us to continue creating a new and cleaner energy future.

In 2004, Colorado voters became the first in the country to adopt a Renewable Portfolio Standard at the ballot box. Since taking office in 2007, I have enacted nearly four dozen pieces of New Energy Economy legislation, including a bill to double Colorado's voter-approved RPS. Under the new law, 20 percent of our electricity must come from renewable sources by 2020. My administration also implemented Colorado's first Climate Action Plan, calling for a 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and an 80 percent reduction by 2050.

If there is a lesson in Colorado's New Energy Economy for other states and the nation as a whole, it is that good energy policy and climate policy can energize the economy and help create good-paying private sector jobs.

In Colorado, education policy also is part of the equation. To ensure we are providing this growing clean-energy sector with a highly-skilled workforce, Colorado is expanding and strengthening educational, job-training and workforce development programs all across the state.

From our first days in office, my administration created a P-20 Education Coordinating Council and a Jobs Cabinet. In just a few years, we will be one of the only state's in the country with a completely aligned educational system from pre-school to grad-school, providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in modern, 21st century industries like energy. The Jobs Cabinet is creating new bridges between education and industry so that we are providing businesses and sectors with the types of workers they need, when and where they need them.

In addition, earlier this year, I signed legislation that strengthens the Colorado First job-training program, which allows industries like renewable energy and energy efficiency to partner with community colleges to better train their next generation of employees.

In the coming weeks, my administration will announce a new program that will give students in the building and construction programs certification for the latest green building practices,

technologies and techniques. At the same time, a new Green Job handbook issued by my energy office spells out for students or those wanting to shift careers a detailed roadmap to the rich variety of green jobs, and the kind of coursework and degrees needed to get there.

Colorado is blessed with some of the best research institutions in the world, and to maximize those assets, we have established the Colorado Renewable Energy Collaboratory. The Collaboratory is a partnership linking the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, the Colorado School of Mines and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

Based in Golden, NREL is the crown jewel of the renewable research world, responsible for much of the clean-energy innovation and development of the past few decades.

I visited NREL a month ago. Not to see a new research project or technological development, but to welcome the first graduating class from the Veterans Green Jobs Program. These graduates are recent returnees from Iraq who have now been trained to do energy audits, the first analytical step to determine what improvements are necessary in a home to make it more efficient. The veterans see the work – creating energy independence, cleaning up the environment – as an extension of their military service.

A sniper from the 1st Infantry Division in Iraq, Garrett Reppenhagen is now the regional program director for Veterans for Green Jobs. He compared the graduates with the Knights of the Round Table, who swore allegiance to a cause greater than themselves.

As I noted earlier, government policies are having an effect on our economy. We have literally created an ecosystem that supports education, training, research, development and investment. This holistic approach is having a very positive impact.

In February 2009, it was estimated that there were 17 out-of-work construction workers for every one job available in Boulder County. The county recently launched an innovative financing program where they issued bonds to pay for people to do energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades to their homes, paid back through a voluntary assessment on their property taxes.

Nate Burger of Eco-Handyman says the program has generated \$100,000 in jobs for his small company. Renewable energy companies are hiring to keep up with demand. The first bond issuance alone is expected to create 800 new construction sites, putting people back to work this summer.

Blake Jones from Namaste Solar started his company in 2004 with two friends. Now, five years later and with a workforce of more than 50 employees, they are responsible for installing more than 650 systems in Colorado that generate over 3.5 megawatts of power – enough to power 4,500 homes. President Obama highlighted Mr. Jones and Namaste Solar when he signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in Denver in February.

And of course, the Recovery Act is providing even more momentum for Colorado's New Energy Economy. Colorado will see investment in the low income weatherization program double this year. Already, weatherization agencies are ramping up and hiring insulation installers, retrofit specialists, furnace installers and others who will serve a record 10,000 low- income homes in Colorado over the next year.

Not only will this investment create direct jobs for the workforce in weatherization, but it will allow homeowners and renters to invest money saved on energy costs in other important needs. Weatherization programs like this provide an essential benefit for families living on the margins, while creating jobs and cleaning the environment.

Energy independence is not a pipe dream. America is blessed with resources unequalled anywhere in the world. Solar, wind, geothermal energy and hydro-power offer clean sources of electricity to power our homes, businesses, and vehicles of the future. Smart-grid technologies provide an entirely new way of managing electricity generation, distribution and consumption.

But this New Energy Economy is not limited to just these resources, as Colorado is proving. Our state and region have large reserves of coal, and we are committed to working with coal companies, utilities, and our sister states to develop and deploy technologies to capture and then sequester carbon dioxide. It is critically important to demonstrate these technologies on a commercial scale in multiple locations around the nation if we are to meet the President's climate goals while also maintaining a diverse electric energy portfolio.

Colorado also is home to large natural gas reserves that can play a critically important role in a New Energy Economy that is committed to meeting national climate goals. Natural gas is the least carbon-intensive fossil fuel and its use also produces far less conventional pollutants than does the combustion of other fossil fuels. It can be used to power part of our vehicle fleet, with far less impact to the environment and with significant national security benefits, since it is a home-grown fuel. It can and should be used to generate more of our electrical energy supplies. And the good news is that new discoveries of shale gas in Colorado, Texas, and in the Northeast are significantly expanding the nation's natural gas reserves. We no longer have to talk of natural gas as a transitional fuel – it is and should be a permanent part of a lower-carbon, domestic fuel source.

Now, more than ever, people in all walks of life are seeing an opportunity to seek the American dream through the emerging industries of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The America our children and grandchildren will inherit will produce and consume energy in vastly different ways than we do today. Just as the industrial revolution created the jobs of the 20th century, we now usher in a new century of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial vigor. The New Energy Economy is creating the pathway to these new careers and a new American century of energy leadership.