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February 25, 2008

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
The Honorable Mike Huckabee
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable Barack Obama
The Honorable Ron Paul

Dear Presidential Candidates:

Energy is the defining challenge and economic opportunity of our time.

The competitiveness and economic growth of the United States hinge on our ability to craft and implement a comprehensive strategy for increasing energy security and sustainability. In an age of competing global demands for energy and unstable sources of supply, our prosperity is linked to the kinds of energy we use and how efficiently we use it.

The economic toll of the exponential increase in global demand for energy has rippled across our economy, adding to the cost of doing business and squeezing the pocketbooks of ordinary Americans. Securing access to energy supply, increasing the nation's energy productivity, maximizing the economic value of each unit of energy consumed and minimizing environmental impact – each of these issues must be addressed if the U.S. is to remain competitive.

To ensure our leadership in the global economy, we must act now. Energy security cannot be achieved without a comprehensive national strategy. This certainly includes reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil, but an energy strategy must encompass more. Redundancy of supply and diversity of source are essential if the U.S. is not to be overly dependent on *any* one energy source or supplier in the marketplace.

The match-up of appropriate energy source to sector of use must be optimized – whether supplying energy to heat homes, to transport goods, to light cities or to power enterprises. Each of these elements must be supported by innovation: technological innovation, policy innovation and innovative global collaboration.

To date, key energy issues have been almost entirely absent from the presidential debates, even though energy is a driver of U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace and is a key focus of business enterprise worldwide. There has been little discussion about the role of government in creating the environment for progress in energy security. There has also been limited debate about how to create the conditions necessary to stimulate innovation in the energy arena, or about the steps necessary to ensure an adequate energy workforce to meet the needs of the 21st century.

We represent a cross-section of private sector leaders – from business, labor and academe – who see the tremendous potential for the creation of new energy markets, technologies, industries and good jobs ahead if we properly harness our resources. The economic boom that would accompany these energy advances would drive our economy for a generation. Our institutions and companies are already acting to capitalize on and shape these opportunities.



**Council on
Competitiveness**

The Council on Competitiveness [Energy Security, Innovation & Sustainability \(ESIS\) Initiative Steering Committee](#) – comprised of more than 40 corporate CEOs, labor leaders and university presidents – is developing recommendations for both public and private sector action to improve U.S. competitiveness by addressing these energy challenges. By way of this letter, we share with you proceedings from our initial dialogue in [Define. The Energy-Competitiveness Relationship](#).

But we cannot do it alone. We urge you to use the power of your candidacy and your office to communicate and act upon the tremendous urgency, economic opportunity and national importance of transforming the U.S. energy system. We ask that you assign the highest priority to creating the enabling conditions that will stimulate the investment and innovation required for a sustainable and secure energy future.

Meeting our global energy security needs will only be possible with strong national leadership and a solid base of public understanding and support. Toward that end, we invite you to join with us in working to elevate the national discussion on these critical energy issues. We have outlined three key questions (attached) which we welcome your comment on in the remainder of the primary and general election cycles.

We are committed to guiding our nation on a path toward a more secure, sustainable and competitive energy future. By harnessing our national innovation capabilities, we can continue to drive our economic growth and enhance the standard of living for this and future generations. We welcome you to consider us as a resource in this undertaking.

Sincerely,

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Shirley Ann Jackson, Ph.D.
ESIS Initiative Co-Chair and President,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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D. Michael Langford
ESIS Initiative Co-Chair and National
President, Utility Workers Union of
America, AFL-CIO

\S\

James W. Owens
ESIS Initiative Co-Chair and Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer, Caterpillar Inc.

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Deborah L. Wince-Smith
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Energy Security, Innovation & Sustainability Challenges and Opportunities

ISSUE: Energy Security and Sustainability

The economic competitiveness and national security of the United States require a comprehensive strategy to increase energy security in a sustainable manner. Developing and executing this strategy will require national leadership and public-private investment. This is a complex problem requiring comprehensive, collaborative solutions. We must use energy more efficiently and ensure redundancy of supply and diversity of source. The private sector is looking to the government to establish policies to accelerate and support this transition.

- *As President, what will be the first steps you will take to advance a comprehensive American energy security and sustainability strategy?*

ISSUE: Energy Innovation

Technological innovation is essential to meet our future energy needs. Advanced energy technologies, products and services will lead to the creation of new markets, industries and jobs in the United States. Other nations are outpacing us, investing in energy innovation, and winning increasing shares of existing and emerging global energy markets. The seeds of innovation are sown by basic research, and yet U.S. investment in energy R&D has fallen off sharply since the 1970's. We need coherent, consistent national policies, and increased R&D to stimulate energy innovation and the economy.

- *What federal policies would you put in place to create the conditions necessary to stimulate energy innovation, including enhancing energy productivity to get the maximum economic value out of each unit of energy consumed?*

ISSUE: Energy Workforce Development

U.S. energy security depends on a talented, creative and skilled workforce – one capable of meeting current and future needs. The average American oil and gas worker is now 50 years old, and half of the electric power industry workforce will retire in the next five to ten years, threatening a severe workforce shortage in these vital energy industries. We are also not training enough new workers – the science, math and engineering graduates needed to sustain technological leadership. As a nation, it is essential that we attract, engage and retain a new generation of workers in the energy field.

- *What steps would you take to ensure we have the energy workforce we need for the 21st century?*