May 11, 2020

Honorable Mitt Romney
United States Senate
125 S. State Street, Suite 8402
Salt Lake City, UT 84138

Dear Senator Romney:

The undersigned organizations want to thank you for your efforts to help Utah communities and businesses gain assistance to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud that businesses and organizations in our state and our community have come together to stop the spread of the virus and to protect the long-term health and well-being of our nation.

Utah’s clean energy sector is a robust and growing part of Utah’s economy, providing services that reduce emissions, save money, and create good-paying jobs to communities throughout the state. Recent data from NASEO and The Energy Future Initiative’s 2020 U.S. Energy and Employment Report shows that Utah’s energy efficiency companies employ over 32,000 people and our solar companies
employ over 7,000 individuals. However, this sector is seeing significant negative impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Congress considers new legislation to provide relief to Utah’s businesses and to revive our nation’s economy, we ask you to prioritize measures that can help sustain our state’s clean energy businesses and local sustainability professionals. These measures will not only reduce emissions, but also save money and improve the resiliency of our communities.

We respectfully request that you support the following six elements in upcoming economic recovery and infrastructure legislation by Congress:

1) Protect Utah’s robust clean energy industry: Utah’s clean energy industry has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress must take action to protect the industry to make sure that companies can survive the lockdown and be in position to do business during recovery. We should ensure that clean energy projects that are in development are not canceled or significantly delayed because of the pandemic. Specifically, we request your support for the following:

   • Allow existing federal clean energy tax credits to be available for direct pay or to be refundable to facilitate their monetization given the challenges with the tax equity market. We support allowing energy efficiency and energy storage projects to participate in direct pay as well.
   • Extend the tax credits for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects under Section 25C and Section 25D for residential energy efficiency and solar improvements, and extend the start of construction for the Section 45 and Section 48 investment and production tax credits for commercial and utility-scale renewable energy projects for one year in order to allow projects disrupted by the pandemic to receive the credit at 2020 levels.
   • Change the safe harbor “placed-in-service” deadlines from the current four years to six years to provide for a two-year extension.

2) Make robust investments in energy efficiency: Utah’s energy efficiency companies are seeing especially significant impacts as a result of the pandemic, as our state’s utility energy efficiency programs have slowed and supply chains for important energy efficiency products have been interrupted. Our energy efficiency companies are not only important job creators, but they also offer long-term energy and cost savings to families, businesses, and public agencies, while also reducing criteria pollutants. We encourage you to prioritize energy efficiency programs in any economic recovery legislation, specifically by:

   • Creating a “Home Online Performance-based Energy Efficiency” (“HOPE4HOMES”) Training Program as proposed by the Building Performance Association that would offer stipends to
small business contractors to take online residential energy efficiency training courses and prepare them to work on residential and commercial energy efficiency projects during the economic recovery.

- Strengthening federal tax incentives for energy conservation by enacting the Home Energy Savings Act (S.2486), the new home energy efficiency tax credit in Section 45L through the New Home Energy Efficiency Act through (S.2595), and the Energy-Efficient Commercial Buildings Tax Deduction Section 179D. Reinstating these successful programs can spur additional construction activity in new and existing homes and commercial building retrofits across Utah and the United States.

- Ramping up funding for federal energy efficiency programs as part of any recovery package, including the Weatherization Assistance Program, grants and incentives for schools, public buildings, homes, and businesses to undertake substantial energy efficiency projects. This can be accomplished by reviving a program like the Department of Energy’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program. Such investments will deliver meaningful energy savings to Utah customers and taxpayers.

3) Provide assistance to rural Utah: We request that you advocate for federal resources to support economic development in rural Utah communities to ensure that families and workers can prosper as Utah’s energy system undergoes a transition. We specifically support grants and investments to expand rural housing development, home and building energy retrofits, broadband access, telecommuting, and zero-emissions energy demonstration projects where they may be appropriate to provide meaningful economic and work opportunities in communities dependent upon traditional energy industries.

4) Invest in innovative and transformational energy projects: Given today’s low interest rates, economic recovery legislation is an opportune time to invest in transformative energy projects that can help modernize our electricity grid, provide long-term value to utility customers, and reduce emissions over the long term. We request that you support investments in energy storage projects, such as the major energy storage project in development near Delta, electric transmission capacity, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and energy management technologies to help optimize customer demand. Utah is in a unique and welcome position to harness these investments in a manner that will attract continued investment in renewable energy, benefit local companies and utility customers, and reduce criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

5) Support resilient infrastructure and building retrofit projects: The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the need to ensure that critical infrastructure in housing, healthcare, critical response facilities, designated emergency shelters, and community centers is resilient and reliable in the face of natural disasters and unprecedented events. We have experienced power outages from earthquake activity this year, and we expect that Utah and our neighboring states will likely see major wildfire events and longer duration heatwaves in the coming years that may disrupt power supply.
Planning for and investing now in projects that can sustain electricity and heating services during such events is critical. We encourage you to prioritize grants to critical facilities to undertake energy resiliency projects, including energy efficiency retrofits, onsite renewable energy systems, energy storage systems, and microgrids, in order to support innovative, emerging technologies and practices. An energy resiliency grant program could be modeled upon the “Mission Critical Public Facilities Infrastructure Renewable” proposal developed by the Alliance to Save Energy and the National Association of Energy Service Companies (NAESCO).

6) **Support local environmental health and sustainability programs:** Utah communities have embraced efforts to save money, improve public health, and reduce emissions through local environmental health and sustainability initiatives. These initiatives are the laboratories for innovative work on air quality, clean energy, transportation, land use planning, waste diversion and recycling, and local food production. At a time when municipal budgets are likely to be negatively impacted by the pandemic, we request that you support funding to help Utah municipalities maintain their environmental health and sustainability programs and staff so that they can continue their vital work.

Thank you kindly for your consideration and your assistance. Please feel free to reach out to Utah Clean Energy’s government relations manager, Josh Craft, at 801-590-4823 or josh@utahcleanenergy.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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