



UNITED STATES SENATOR HARRY REID, FROM NEVADA

# News Release

(202) 224-9521

<http://reid.senate.gov>

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

*For Immediate Release*  
**2008**

*Tuesday, February 19,*

**CONTACT: Jon Summers (in Nevada), 202-329-3848**  
**Blair Hinderliter (in D.C.), 202-224-9521**

## **REID DELIVERS MAJOR POLICY ADDRESS AT “POWER-GEN RENEWABLE ENERGY” CONFERENCE**

*Majority Leader lays out his plans to promote renewable energy*

**Las Vegas, NV** – Nevada Senator Harry Reid today delivered a major policy address at POWER-GEN Renewable Energy & Fuels conference about the importance of investing in renewable energy and how Nevada stands to benefit from the clean energy revolution.

“Every time our country has faced a daunting challenge, we have risen to the occasion. That’s who we are. That’s what we do best,” said Reid. “And that’s what we must do today: return to the endless well of American ingenuity – and turn to the endless sources of renewable energy all around us – to set a new course that will keep us safe, create good jobs, and protect our planet for generations yet to come.”

During the speech, Reid established the following policy goals to promote renewable energy:

- **Consumer Choice.** Power companies should make renewable energy available

to consumers and give them the option to power their homes from those sources at a fair and reasonable cost.

- **Consumer Empowerment.** Consumers should have the ability to reduce their power bills by generating renewable power at home or at their business. Consumers should also have the option to have a net meter installed at a fair and reasonable cost so they can get credit from their electricity provider for home generation.
- **Make Space for Renewable Energy.** The government should set aside significant tracts of federal land that are environmentally appropriate for renewable energy production.
- **Encourage Investment in Nevada.** Provide strong incentives to utility companies to encourage them to invest first in energy efficiency and renewables.
- **Pave the Way for Electric Cars.** Build a smart power grid that can charge electric automobiles and store electricity to reduce our reliance on oil, including oil from unstable regions of the world.

The POWER-GEN Renewable Energy & Fuels conference brings leaders from across the country together in a discussion about developing another industry Nevada can be proud of while creating thousands of good-paying jobs, meeting the state's power needs, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and protecting our air and the environment.

Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery.

###

### **Reid's Keynote Address**

A millennium and a half ago, the Rabbis wrote –

“When God created the first man, he took him around to all the trees in the Garden of Eden and said to him: ‘See my handiwork, how beautiful and choice...Be careful not to ruin and destroy my world, for if you do...there is no one to repair it after you.’”

In these past 1,500 years, God must truly be troubled at the man-made damage to his handiwork – especially the last oil-driven century.

The effects of human activity on earth are easy to see.

Pollution is filth in our water. Pollution is filth in our air. Pollution is filth in our soil.

Wildfires, dangerous weather patterns, and drought.

Last week, we learned that Lake Mead – the water source for 22 million of us – may disappear in thirteen years.

Our way of life and our very existence is threatened.

Can we change, starting with a clean energy revolution that grows our economy?  
Of course we can.

Can we change, starting with a clean energy revolution that protects our planet?  
Of course we can.

Can we change our planet, starting with a clean energy revolution that strengthens our national security? Of course we can.

Is there a better place to start this revolution than Nevada? No.

The sun shines in Nevada almost every day. This is good for our tens of millions of tourists, and good for the production of solar power.

Nevada is America's most mountainous state but for Alaska. 314 separate mountain ranges. 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. Boundary Peak which we share with California, reaches 14,000 feet into heaven.

2 million acres of designated federally-decreed pristine wilderness.

Our own national park we call Great Basin.

Red Rock conservation area. Plus our joint custody with California of America's only alpine glacial lake, named Tahoe.

But as the most arid state in America, we must value our natural resources.

I have been the lead cheerleader for Nevada for decades, because it is a terrific place to live, work and invest.

It is our assigned homework, our assigned challenge – to keep Nevada a wonderful place to live, to work, and even a better place to invest.

Here and in much of the West, sunlight is inexhaustible and free, but in the entire Western United States, water is not. In fact, it is becoming nearly exhausted and more precious than gold.

That's why, just as Nevadans generations ago blazed a new Western frontier, today we are blazing another frontier – the frontier of energy innovation.

Fortunately, Nevada has one of our nation's most ambitious renewable portfolio standards: 20% by 2015.

Per capita, Nevada leads America in the production of solar and geothermal energy.

Nellis Air Force Base – which can be seen from this hotel -- just cut the ribbon on America's largest solar array – which supplies more than 25% of the base's power for the 10,000 people who live and work there. This will save the Air Force \$1 million every year.

So, good things are happening in Nevada. But oh -- do we have so, so far to go.

One megawatt of power can heat and cool hundreds of homes.

With Nevada continuing to grow, we will need thousands of additional megawatts.

Where is this new energy direction? Can we continue doing what we have done in years past to create new energy? Perish the thought – for if we don't change – we literally will perish.

Where is this new energy direction? The wind. One study shows that from wind,

Nevada could produce 6,000 megawatts of clean power every year -- enough electricity to power nearly 2 million homes.

Where is this new energy direction? Geothermal. The Western Governors' Association says our state could generate 3,000 additional megawatts from geothermal within the next twenty years. Enough electricity to power nearly 1 million homes.

Where is this new energy direction? The sun. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory said Nevada could develop 5,000 megawatts from solar energy in the next decade. Enough electricity to power almost 2 million homes.

When we meet these standards, millions of homes and up to 15 million people will have comfort in body and mind – and the earth of which the Rabbis spoke more than a thousand years ago will be replenished and restored.

In fact, the U.S. Department of Energy says “the solar energy resource in a 100-mile-square area of Nevada could supply the entire United States with all its electricity.”

That's 800 gigawatts of power – using solar-electric power that would cover less than 6% of Nevada's land.

What may seem like science fiction in years past is pure fiction if we now don't start moving forward with innovation, invention and sound intention to change past practices.

If anyone ever tells you that we shouldn't be investing heavily in solar energy – remind them that the sunlight absorbed by the earth in just forty minutes is equivalent to global energy consumption for an entire year.

As part of the fiction facing innovation and a vision of tomorrow are those who say that coal and oil are our only viable options.

But those who resist innovation are the same ones who have the most to lose as the sun, the wind and the heat from the earth become very real options.

Part of America's nonfiction is all around us to read and hear. Because by the end of this year:

- America's geothermal output will be up to 3,000 megawatts;
- Our wind power output will be up to 22,000 megawatts;
- And our solar electric output will be nearly 1,200 megawatts.

The U.S. renewable energy industry said in December that it will deliver 550-750 gigawatts of energy capacity by the year 2025. That's 25% of all the energy our country consumes.

All of this good work is occurring with virtually no support from the Bush Administration.

Think what a sustained commitment from the federal government would do to launch us to new horizons.

Global investment in clean energy grew 41% last year to nearly \$120 billion.

Green investing used to be a field for the experimental. Now, titans like Citigroup, GE, JP Morgan Chase, Kleiner Perkins and Morgan Stanley are leading investments for alternative energy.

Let's be clear, these giants of the financial world are investing because there is a profit to be made. Good! This is America. And if these companies happen to make a profit while doing what's right for our country, I think that's a good thing.

This profit potential exists largely because the cost of renewables is dropping every day, while the cost of conventional fuels, like coal, keeps rising.

The cost of wind and geothermal is down to five cents per kilowatt hour. If the federal government provides the necessary support for commercialization, solar electric and concentrating solar will reach cost parity with fossil fuels within twenty months.

Conversely, construction costs for coal plants are rising rapidly. For example, it was reported last week that China's demand for coal will push global prices even

higher.

And many thousands of miles from far away China, yes here in Nevada, the Ely Energy Center coal project is over budget and experts say it will wind up costing well over \$4 billion—if the power company even builds it at all.

Once that massive construction bill is paid, the plant would cough and sputter out dirty power that will not only pollute the earth, but cost consumers 12 or 13 cents per kilowatt-hour. More – much more -- than they are paying now.

And that's not all. On top of the high price of coal power, studies show that there are hidden costs of \$30 per megawatt hour or more – like respiratory illness, radiation, and hazardous waste.

A UNLV study found that solar, wind, geothermal and biomass projects would create more than \$20 billion in business for Nevada over the next 25 years.

Each new megawatt of geothermal power creates up to ten new jobs.

Each new megawatt of solar-thermal and wind power create at least 6 new jobs.

If just half of Nevada's potential clean energy resources were developed, 22,000 new jobs in the next decade would be created.

Does coal compare? Not even close.

The \$30 per megawatt hour of hidden environmental and health costs is just the tip of the dirty iceberg.

Fossil fuels are contributing to global warming. We're experiencing severe and unpredictable weather, our ice caps are melting at a record pace, and as we are seeing in Lake Mead, our water sources are in danger all over America.

Big energy companies see these warning signs as clearly as we, but their solution -- build more coal plants.

If the current proposals for new Western coal plants are built, they would consume

114 million gallons of water per day.

That's enough water to meet the needs of 591,000 homes.

The only type of power that uses more water than coal is nuclear.

What is the daily discharge from a coal fired plant? It is waste, contaminated with unsafe levels of arsenic, lead and other toxins – other poisons.

This foul discharge is in our lakes, streams and water tables. This is the water we drink.

This Nevada coal plan is just one example. The damage caused by fossil fuels, of course, is not limited to Nevada or the West.

Our country burns 1 billion tons of coal every year. That produces 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Coal plants release sixty varieties of hazardous air pollutants, among them lead, chromium, arsenic and mercury.

Is it any wonder that tens of millions of Americans live in areas that fail to meet the EPA's air quality standards?

Is it any wonder that hundreds of thousands of Americans every year suffer from asthma attacks, respiratory problems and heart attacks, all from the dirty air caused by coal plants?

Is today – is tomorrow – the time to invest in new coal for electricity plants -- the answer is a resounding no.

We've all seen the advertising campaigns for a mythological substance called "clean coal." We know there's no such thing. There is no clean coal, only cleaner coal. Less dirty coal.

In Congress for more than a quarter of a century, I have supported research for a cleaner coal. After billions of our taxpayer dollars – limited progress has been



made.

I will continue my support – but if anything good comes from this, it will be many tomorrows from this February day.

Vice President Gore said that – “We...need a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store carbon dioxide.”

That means for now, no new coal plants. Let us – in Nevada – follow the admonition of the Nobel and Oscar-winning Vice President.

It is not enough just to say we are against dirty power and for clean power.

Our energy demands are rising. They must be met.

The only way we can meet them with clean, renewable energy is for the public and private sectors to work together.

Working with fellow Democrats and some courageous Republicans, we can change the status quo.

We must pass a national Renewable Electricity Standard -- a minimum requirement of renewable fuels as a percentage of all energy consumption.

This national Renewable Standard would encourage utilities to make real national investments in this new market opportunity.

Rather than importing millions upon millions of tons of black coal every year, Nevada could be exporting clean energy to other states.

We have tried to legislate a renewable standard for the past seven years in Congress, but each year the Bush White House has stopped us. But we are getting closer, and they know it.

With your continued support, it is only a matter of time until a national Renewable Standard finally becomes a reality throughout the land.

We of course need to encourage investment and entrepreneurship.

That's why, in spite of stubborn White House opposition, we as Congressional Democrats are pushing for long term extensions of tax incentives for renewable energy.

Recently we got 51 Democrats and 8 Republican Senators to legislate these incentives. We need one more Republican to get to the magic number of 60.

If the White House and 41 Republican Senators continue their opposition, American investment in the green-collar economy -- and the jobs it creates -- will go overseas.

If the fossilized energy industry had invested in renewables ten years ago, many of the obstacles they hide behind today would have already been solved.

This conference is important to recognize the fiscal and moral imperatives that lie ahead.

Through the exchange of ideas comes innovation and progress. The problems are many. But the solutions and ideas coming from meetings just like this are extremely impressive.

For example, here are a few ideas we should pursue together:

-- Every American consumer should be able to choose what kind of power they want to buy. Anyone who wants to buy zero-emission, clean, renewable power should have that option at a fair and reasonable cost.

-- Every consumer who wants to reduce their power bills by generating renewable power at home or at their business should have that option. Electricity providers should give every homeowner the option of installing a net meter at a fair and reasonable price.

And there should be national, uniform interconnection standards for homeowners and businesses with renewable energy generation.

-- The government should commit to setting aside significant tracts of federal land that are environmentally appropriate for renewable energy production.

-- We should begin giving utilities a profit motive to invest in energy efficiency and renewables. Now, utility companies make more money the more power they sell. It's time to incentivize efficiency.

-- We should discard ancient technologies and build a smart electric grid.

We began by being reminded by the Jewish sages of yesteryear, let us close by accepting their ancient challenge: to see the work of our creator in our oceans, rivers and streams.

To see the work of our creator in the beauty of our snow-capped mountains, our arid deserts, our grass-covered plains, our lush forests.

And all commit to this being the beginning of the end of despoiling God's creations.

Alone we will fail, but together we will succeed.