

**American Rivers * Center for American Progress Action Fund * Climate Protection Action Fund
Earthjustice * Environment America * Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Law and Policy Center * Green For All * League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters * National Audubon Society * National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council * Ocean Conservancy * Sierra Club * The Wilderness Society
World Wildlife Fund * Union of Concerned Scientists**

June 8, 2010

Dear Chairmen Baucus, Bingaman, Boxer, Dodd, Leahy, Lieberman, Lincoln, and Rockefeller:

As you prepare to respond to Majority Leader Reid's letter of June 3rd asking for your recommendations on provisions that should be included in comprehensive energy legislation to be considered by the Senate this summer, we write to reiterate our firm belief that to be an effective response to the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico such legislation must hold energy companies responsible for cleaning up the pollution they emit into our air and water. We start with the same premise the President clearly articulated on June 2nd – that the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico underscores the need for legislation that will move us away from our dependence on oil and toward a clean energy economy:

We consume more than 20% of the world's oil, but have less than 2% of the world's oil reserves. So without a major change in our energy policy, our dependence on oil means that we will continue to send billions of dollars of our hard-earned wealth to other countries every month – including countries in dangerous and unstable regions. In other words, our continued dependence on fossil fuels will jeopardize our national security. It will smother our planet. And it will continue to put our economy and our environment at risk.

The President went on to say that the time has come to aggressively accelerate the transition to clean energy, and that:

... [t]he only way the transition to clean energy will succeed is if the private sector is fully invested in this future – if capital comes off the sidelines and the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs is unleashed. And the only way to do that is by finally putting a price on carbon pollution.

The President is right. Only a comprehensive bill that includes limits on carbon pollution can put in place the incentives needed to create the jobs and security that are essential to our future prosperity. This legislation should be written in a way that makes clear to the American people how it is responsive to the Gulf disaster. And it needs to take aggressive steps to deal with the immediate issues raised by the BP spill, as well as the underlying problem of oil dependence. This effort can succeed by articulating clearly the security, economic, and environmental benefits of these measures so that the defenders of big oil and dirty coal – as well as ideological opponents of reform—can't hide behind empty rhetoric and delaying tactics.

With that in mind, we urge you to draw on existing bills, many of which were developed in a bipartisan manner, to assemble comprehensive clean energy and climate legislation that includes titles that deal with the following matters:

- Direct response to the tragedy in the Gulf and its causes. This should include ensuring that BP pays for all remediation and assistance for affected Gulf states and key reforms of drilling regulation to ensure that environmentally sensitive resources are protected.

- Reduce U.S. dependence on oil. This should set ambitious national targets for reducing America's dangerous dependence on oil and direct the President to meet these goals using both existing and new authority to increase vehicle efficiency, improve the efficiency of our transportation infrastructure, increase production of sustainable biofuels, and electrify our transportation system.
- Limit carbon pollution. This should build on the core elements of the Kerry-Lieberman bill and foster a dynamic partnership with state and local governments. These limits are essential to mobilize the level of investment required to build the clean energy economy Americans want. They should be designed to protect consumers, and provide incentives for investment in clean energy manufacturing to smooth the transition to a clean energy future, and help rebuild our manufacturing companies to compete in the 21st century.
- Improve energy efficiency and expand renewable energy production. Efficiency provisions should include either an ambitious electricity efficiency resource standard or a requirement that one-third of the allowances allocated to electric and gas local distribution companies be used for efficiency improvements. Provisions on renewables could build on existing proposals, but need to be strong enough to significantly enhance what existing state standards are already achieving.

These issues are all related and should be put forward as a package. For example, efforts to expand transmission capacity and electrify our transportations system could inadvertently increase carbon emissions unless they are part of a comprehensive policy that requires pollution cuts.

Several Senators have already developed legislation addressing most of these issues. For example, Gulf response measures have been developed by Senators Vitter and LeMieux, as well as by Senator Menendez and others; oil reduction measures have been advanced by Senators Dorgan, Alexander, and Merkley; carbon pollution limits have been developed by Senators Cantwell and Collins and Senators Kerry and Lieberman; and energy efficiency and renewable energy measures have been advanced by Senator Bingaman and by Senator Lugar. Each of these bills has its strengths; several have fundamental weaknesses as well. But by combining their strengths, they can provide the basis for assembling a broad package that can be brought to the Senate floor this summer.

The failings of the status quo are literally right before our eyes as the Gulf tragedy continues to play out. The American people will support a package that clearly responds to the immediate tragedy, moves us away from oil dependence, and puts in place critical incentives that will send a clear economic signal to move the U.S. to a clean energy economy. This will create jobs, make the U.S. more secure, and protect the environment.

It's what the public has a right to expect.

Sincerely,

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Michael Brune
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Kevin Knobloch
President
Union of Concerned Scientists

Bill Meadows
President
The Wilderness Society

Carter Roberts
President and CEO
World Wildlife Fund

cc: The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Charles Schumer
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Byron Dorgan
The Honorable Robert Menendez
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
The Honorable John Kerry