

**Summary of Testimony of Reid Detchon
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**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
March 12, 2009**

The Energy Future Coalition, in partnership with the Center for American Progress and later the Energy Foundation, recently undertook a series of listening sessions with a wide range of stakeholder groups and found remarkably broad support for a new network of extra high-voltage lines (345 kilovolts or above) to bring high-quality renewable energy resources – wind in the Great Plains, solar in the desert Southwest – to market.

Our vision statement for the National Clean Energy Smart Grid has been endorsed by some 55 organizations. These include the AFL-CIO, the Council on Competitiveness, and the Digital Energy Solutions Campaign, along with many renewable energy advocates and environmental groups, who are not usually prominent supporters of new transmission lines.

What brought them to the table and ultimately to agreement was the imperative of action to address with urgency the growing global climate crisis. They could accept the construction of new transmission lines if and only if the lines transported low-carbon energy. Building new lines to deliver electricity more efficiently from conventional coal-fired power plants was unacceptable.

In our discussions, the three most important issues standing in the way of new long-distance transmission lines for renewable energy were planning, siting, and cost allocation. Siting was seen as the most pressing issue, because opposition to new lines makes siting extremely time-consuming, difficult, and expensive. However, planning turned out to be the more important issue, as the group concluded that better planning could reduce the difficulty of siting new lines and provide the basis for equitable allocation of costs.

We have been gratified to see many of our recommendations reflected in S. 539, introduced last week by Senator Reid, and in the majority staff draft circulated prior to this hearing – notably, a system of interconnection-wide transmission planning under strict timetables, with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission empowered to act if the states do not, supported by broad-based cost allocation and underpinned by federal siting authority.

Neither of these bills, however, yet includes provisions dealing with the security of the grid, especially against cybersecurity threats. The Defense Science Board's 2008 report, "More Fight – Less Fuel," found that "critical national security and homeland defense missions are at an unacceptably high risk of extended outage from failure of the grid." I urge you to incorporate measures to ensure the protection of the grid from external threats. Our economy and security deserve no less.