

KEN SALAZAR
COLORADO



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510 - 3903

February 14, 2006

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg and Ranking Member Conrad:

As the budget process begins, I respectfully request your support for a more robust allocation to the Energy function of the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Resolution to ensure full funding for the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush outlined his "Advanced Energy Initiative" to help reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. Among other things, the President emphasized the Bio-Fuels Initiative and the Solar America Initiative, both of which will help displace our future demand by increasing funding to develop clean, renewable energy.

One week after the President's State of the Union Address, however, the Department of Energy announced 31 layoffs at NREL, the Department of Energy's premiere national laboratory for renewable energy and energy efficiency research and development. NREL was forced to terminate seven laboratory researchers and 24 support staff as a result of cuts to the laboratory's FY06 budget. These layoffs affected researchers in wind and biomass (including ethanol and cellulosic ethanol) – two of the technologies that the President cited in his speech as being capable of replacing a portion of U.S. oil imports.

We must substantially increase our investment in renewable energy and clean energy technologies to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. We are at a critical juncture in our efforts to develop a sustainable plan to achieve energy independence in the 21st Century. The country can ill-afford these job cuts at the country's premiere renewable research laboratory, this year or at any time in the next two decades.

I am pleased the President's budget proposes new funding for solar and biomass technology initiatives, which should help the country achieve greater energy independence by 2025. NREL funding in FY07 is projected to increase from \$161.6

Chairman Gregg and Ranking Member Conrad

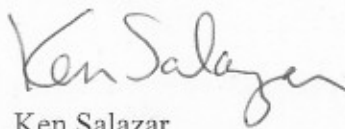
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million (the FY06 appropriation) to \$175.5 million under the President's budget request submitted to Congress last week. This proposed budget increase represents an important first step in the right direction, but we can and must do better. In December, I joined over 30 members of the Senate to support full authorized funding for the renewable and energy efficiency programs in the energy bill. I believe full funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs at NREL is one of the keys to solving America's energy crisis.

Providing NREL with the resources it needs will lead our nation to greater energy independence and security. I respectfully request that you help me protect funding for this critical laboratory from further unnecessary budget cuts by including robust funding for the Department of Energy in the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Resolution. A more robust allocation to the Energy function of the budget resolution will provide NREL with the full funding it deserves, as the nation energy crisis demands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Salazar
United States Senator