

Supporting a Solar Carve Out
Rep. Gabrielle Giffords
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Thank you Madam Speaker.

Our nation today is facing many challenges, but three of the greatest, by any measure, are:

- achieving energy independence
- addressing climate change, and
- rebuilding our economy.

These are all significant challenges, but they are also great opportunities. As we confront these issues, we have the chance to make our world stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

One of the best ways to do this is by embracing renewable energy. Renewable energy sources ó especially solar, our nation's most abundant renewable energy source ó offers a real solution to all of the challenges I just mentioned.

Our solar resource is vast, domestic, and free. It is clean and generates electricity without greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the solar power industry is growing and creating thousands of good jobs. For all these reasons, solar is good for America.

This is why I am concerned about the way solar power is treated in the energy and climate bill that recently emerged from the Energy & Commerce Committee.

I commend Chairmen Waxman and Markey, and their committee colleagues, for their persistence and skill in moving this legislation forward. However, I must express my deep concern that the bill does not do nearly enough to promote solar power, one of the best solutions to our nation's energy and climate challenges.

The current Waxman-Markey legislation would establish a federal Renewable Electricity Standard or RES of 20% by 2020. This is an excellent goal.

However, the bill fails to establish a "carve-out" for any specific renewable resources, like solar. In my view, this constitutes an *enormous* missed opportunity.

The primary reason to establish an RES is to create an assured level of demand for renewable electricity. This assured demand allows renewable technologies to increase production, learn by doing, and bring their prices down. This allows them to become cost competitive with traditional energy sources.

However, without carve-outs for different resources, the RES will fall short of its potential. Instead of creating demand for all renewable resources, it will give preference to those that cost the least — currently wind and biomass. Without assured demand, solar will miss out on the opportunity the RES was supposed to create. It will not grow as fast as it otherwise could, or become cost competitive as soon.

I have nothing against wind and biomass, but if we develop these resources at the expense of a more diverse portfolio, we will lose our opportunity to stimulate a domestic solar industry that can compete in the global marketplace.

I understand the reluctance to “pick technology winners.” In fact, I agree with it. But I’m not talking about picking a *technology*, I’m talking about picking a *resource*, and there is a big difference.

It is impossible to imagine a future powered by renewables that does not include significant amounts of solar power in some form. We may not yet know what the best solar technology will ultimately be, but we do know that we and the rest of the world will want power from the sun.

Therefore, it is in our national interest to ensure that the U.S. solar industry is the strongest in the world. We should be encouraging it to grow and innovate. Solar power is in its infancy today, but it will be a global industry tomorrow. We should make sure it is at home in America.

To do that, we should establish an effective incentive in the form of a 20 percent solar carve-out within the RES.

A couple weeks ago, researchers at the University of Arizona in my hometown of Tucson were awarded a \$15 million grant to create an Energy Frontier Research Center. They are working to develop ultrathin solar panels that use dyes to create electricity from sunlight. This project is tremendously exciting, but as we

invest in these technologies, we must ensure we are creating a market to use them.

In the race to become the global solar leader, the clock is ticking and the competition is fierce. America does not have time to waste with poorly-designed policies. This is why I call on my colleagues to support a solar carve-out within the RES. It is a proven mechanism to develop a truly diverse renewable portfolio that includes solar power.

I yield back.

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