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Summary of H.R. 3585, the Solar Technology Roadmap Act

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H.R. 3585 establishes a comprehensive roadmapping process for solar technology research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) activities conducted by the federal government in partnership with the private sector, with a focus on the Department of Energy (DOE). The Secretary of Energy is also directed to award grants to carry out these programs on a merit-reviewed basis, and specifically to provide awards to industry-led consortia for RD&D in solar manufacturing.

The roadmap provision is modeled on the successful National (now International) Technology Roadmap for Semiconductors, which has been instrumental in helping semiconductor technology advance rapidly over the past two decades.

The Secretary must appoint a Solar Technology Roadmap Committee, comprised of at least 11 members, within four months of enactment of the Act. At least one-third but not more than half of the members of the Committee must come from the solar industry. The Secretary must also appoint a Committee chair, who shall not be a federal employee.

H.R. 3585 requires that the Committee create a Solar Technology Roadmap within eighteen months of enactment of the Act. The Roadmap will present the best current estimate of the near-term (up to 2 years), mid-term (up to 7 years), and long-term (up to 15 years) RD&D needs in solar technology. It must also provide direct guidance for solar technology RD&D activities supported by the federal government. The bill requires that 30% of DOE solar RD&D funding in 2012 is pursuant to the recommendations of the Roadmap, ramping up to 75% in 2015. The Committee must update the Roadmap annually as needed, and comprehensively review and revise it every three years.

The Solar Technology Roadmap Act authorizes DOE to conduct at least 10 photovoltaic demonstration projects ranging from 1 to 3 megawatts in size and at least 3 but not more than 5 solar projects greater than 30 megawatts in size. DOE is also required to study the performance of photovoltaic installations and identify opportunities to improve the energy productivity of these systems. In addition, DOE must establish a program of RD&D related to the reuse, recycling, and safe disposal of photovoltaic devices.

The bill authorizes \$350 million for DOE to carry out these activities in FY 2011, rising to \$550 million in FY 2015.