

## Remarks by the President on Energy

### Copper Mountain Solar Project Boulder City, Nevada

March 21, 2012

1:10 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, everybody. (Applause.) Good afternoon. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you so much. It is great to be in Boulder City.

A couple people I want to thank for their outstanding work. First of all, our Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, is in the house. (Applause.) He's the guy in the nice-looking hat. Not only does it look good, but it protects his head, because the hair has gotten a little thin up there. (Laughter.) He is a good-looking guy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: One of them. One of them.

THE PRESIDENT: One of them. (Laughter.) That's right. There's the other guy. (Laughter.)

I also want to thank your Mayor -- a big supporter of solar energy -- and that's Roger Tobler, for being here. Where's Roger? Here he is right there. I just met his beautiful daughter. It's great to see you. (Applause.)

I want to thank Jeffrey Martin, CEO of Sempra, and John and Kevin, who helped just give me this tour.

And Boulder City is the first stop on a tour where I'll be talking about what we're calling an all-of-the-above energy strategy -- all of the above. A strategy that relies on producing more oil and gas here in America, but also more biofuels, more fuel-efficient cars, more wind power and, as you can see, a whole lot more solar power.

This is the largest solar plant of its kind anywhere in the country. That's worth applauding. (Applause.) Every year, you produce enough clean energy to power around 17,000 homes. And that's just the beginning. Things are going so well that another plant is already under construction down the road that will eventually power another 45,000 homes. And a third plant is in development that will be, one day, able to power around 66,000 homes.

Now, this is an area that was hit hard by the recession -- and that's true of the whole state. You guys have been through a lot. But you haven't given up. You looked around at this flat, beautiful land and all this sun -- I just -- I asked the question, how many days of sun do you get a year -- 320 -- that's pretty good -- and decided that Boulder City was the perfect place to generate solar power.

In fact, as I was talking to the folks from Sempra, they were explaining that this location is almost optimal for solar power generation, not only because it's flat, transmission lines were already here, the sun is traveling and there's no haze and it's absolutely clear. And so this is an extraordinary opportunity for the community. And when a business showed up with plans to build a new solar plant, hundreds of local workers got jobs because of it. Thousands of families are now powering their homes with a cleaner, renewable source of energy.

And this is not just happening here in Boulder City -- it's happening in cities and towns all across America. According to experts, we've now got more than 5,600 solar companies nationwide, and many of them are small businesses. There are solar companies in every single state in the Union. And today, we're producing enough solar energy to power 730,000 American homes. And because of the investments we've made as a nation, the use of renewable energies has actually doubled.

So this is an industry on the rise. It's a source of energy that's becoming cheaper; we all know it's cleaner. And more and more businesses are starting to take notice. They're starting to look around for more places like Boulder City to set up shop.

When I took office I said, why not give these businesses some access to public lands that aren't otherwise being utilized? At the time, there wasn't a single solar project in place on public lands -- not one. Today, thanks to some great work by Ken Salazar, we've got 16 solar projects approved. (Applause.) And when they're complete, we'll be generating enough energy to power 2 million homes. And that's progress.

We're also enforcing our trade laws to make sure countries like China aren't giving their solar companies an unfair advantage over ours. (Applause.) And that's important because countries all around the world -- China, Germany, you name it -- they understand the potential. They understand the fact that as countries all around the world become more interested in power generation -- their population is expanding, their income level is going up, they use more electricity -- and we're going to have to make sure that we're the guys who are selling them the technology and the know-how to make sure that they're getting the power that they need.

In fact, just yesterday, our administration determined China wasn't playing fair when it came to solar power. And so we took the first step towards leveling the playing field, because my attitude is, when the playing field is level, then American workers and American businesses are always going to win. And that's why we've got to make sure that our laws are properly enforced. (Applause.)

Now, you'd think given this extraordinary site, given the fact that this is creating jobs, generating power, helping to keep our environment clean, making us more competitive globally, you'd think that everybody would be supportive of solar power. That's what you'd think. And yet, if some politicians had their way, there won't be any more public investment in solar energy. There won't be as many new jobs and new businesses.

Some of these folks want to dismiss the promise of solar power and wind power and fuel-efficient cars. In fact, they make jokes about it. One member of Congress who shall remain unnamed called these jobs "phony" -- called them phony jobs. I mean, think about that mindset, that attitude that says because something is new, it must not be real. If these guys were around when Columbus set sail, they'd be charter members of the Flat Earth Society. (Laughter.) We were just talking about this -- that a lack of imagination, a belief that you can't do something in a new way -- that's not how we operate here in America. That's not who we are. That's not what we're about.

These politicians need to come to Boulder City and see what I'm seeing. (Applause.) They should talk to the people who are involved in this industry, who have benefitted from the jobs, who benefit from ancillary businesses that are related to what's going on right here.

Now, all of you know that when it comes to new technologies, the payoffs aren't always going to come right away. Sometimes, you need a jumpstart to make it happen. That's been true of every innovation that we've ever had. And we know that some discoveries won't pan out. There's the VCR and the Beta and the -- all that stuff. (Laughter.)

And each successive generation recognizes that some technologies are going to work, some won't; some companies will fail, some companies will succeed. Not every auto company succeeded in the early days of the auto industry. Not every airplane manufacturer succeeded in the early days of the aviation. But we understood as Americans that if we keep on this track, and we're at the cutting edge, then that ultimately will make our economy stronger and it will make the United States stronger. It will create jobs. It will create businesses. It will create opportunities for middle-class Americans and folks who want to get into the middle class. That's who we are. That's what we're about. (Applause.)

So I want everybody here to know that as long as I'm President, we will not walk away from the promise of clean energy. (Applause.) We're not going to walk away from places like Boulder City. I'm not going to give up on the need to cede our position to China or Germany or all the other competitors out there who are making massive investments in clean energy technology. I refuse to see us stand by and not make the same commitment. That's not what we do in America. It's not who we are as a country.

One of the main reasons I ran for this office is I didn't think that our leaders were doing enough to tackle the big challenges, the hard challenges, to seize the big opportunities. And energy is one of the best examples. We have been talking about changing our energy policies for 30 years now. When I was the age of these guys right here, when I was 10, 11, right, in the '70s, and my grandparents were complaining about long gas lines, we were talking about how we were going to do things differently. Thirty, 40 years, and we keep on doing the same stuff. We keep on punting. We keep on putting it off. For decades, Washington kept kicking the can down the road.

I don't want to do that anymore. I want to make sure when these guys are grown up that they're seeing solar panels all across the country. They're seeing American-made energy and American-made power. They're benefiting from a cleaner environment. They're seeing jobs and opportunity -- that's what I want to see.

So as long as I'm President, we're going to develop every available source of energy. That is a promise that I'm making to you. (Applause.)

And, yes, that means we make investments in stuff that is new, and we stop subsidizing stuff that's old. The current members of the Flat Earth Society in Congress -- (laughter) -- they would rather see us continue to provide \$4 billion -- \$4 billion -- in tax subsidies, tax giveaways, to the oil companies -- \$4 billion to an industry that is making record profits. Every time you fill up the pump, they're making money. They are doing just fine. They're not having any problems.

And yet, on top of what we're paying at the pump, we're also going to give them \$4 billion in subsidies that could be going into making sure there were investments in clean energy for the future? That doesn't make any sense. Does that make any sense?

AUDIENCE: No!

THE PRESIDENT: All right, I just wanted to make sure. Because I didn't think it was a wise use of your tax dollars. (Laughter.)

We have subsidized oil companies for a century. We want to encourage production of oil and gas, and make sure that wherever we've got American resources, we are tapping into them. But they don't need an additional incentive when gas is \$3.75 a gallon, when oil is \$1.20 a barrel, \$1.25 a barrel. They don't need additional incentives. They are doing fine.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It is our retirement!

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. A century of subsidies to oil companies is long enough. It's time to end the taxpayer giveaways to an industry that's rarely been more profitable, and double down on investments in an energy industry that has never been more promising. (Applause.) That's what we need to do.

So Congress needs to pass more tax credits for projects like this one; needs to provide certainty when it comes to these tax credits. We need to go out there and do what a lot of states are doing right now, which is saying, let's get a certain percentage of our energy from clean energy sources. Because when we do that, that gives a company like this one certainty that they're going to have customers, and they can invest more and build more. (Applause.)

We need to keep Americans on the job. We need to keep these homes powered by clean energy. We need to support the businesses that are doing it.

And again, I just want everybody to be clear -- because sometimes, when you listen to the news and you listen to some of these other politicians, they seem a little bit confused about what I'm saying. We are going to continue producing oil and gas at a record pace. That's got to be part of what we do. We need energy to grow. That's why we're producing more oil right now, here in America, than at any time in the last eight years -- any time in the last eight years. We're opening up more land for oil exploration. We've got more oil rigs operating. There are more pipelines out there that are being approved. I'll be visiting one of those rigs and one of those pipelines this week.

But an energy strategy that focuses only on drilling and not on an energy strategy that will free ourselves from our dependence on foreign oil, that's a losing strategy. That's not a strategy I'm going to pursue. America uses 20 percent of the world's oil, and we've got 2 percent of the world's oil reserves. Think about -- I wasn't a math major, but I just want -- (laughter) -- if you're using 20, you've only got 2, that means you got to bring in the rest from someplace else. Why wouldn't we want to start finding alternatives that make us less reliant, less dependent on what's going on in the Middle East? (Applause.)

So we've got to develop new energy technologies, new energy sources. It's the only way forward. And here in Boulder City, you know that better than anybody. You know the promise that lies ahead because this city has always been about the future. Eight decades ago, in the midst of the Great Depression, the people of Boulder City were busy working on another energy project you may have heard of. Like today, it was a little bit ahead of its time; it was a little bit bigger than this solar plant -- it was a little louder, too. It was called the Hoover Dam. And at the time, it was the largest dam in the world. (Applause.) Even today, it stands as a testimony to American ingenuity, American imagination, the power of the American spirit -- a testimony to the notion we can do anything.

That was true back then; it is true today. You know the choice we need to make when it comes to energy. We've got to invest in a sustained, all-of-the-above strategy that develops every available source of energy. We've got to stay ahead of the curve. We've got to make sure that we're taking some risks. We've got to make sure that we're making the investments that are necessary. We've got to support extraordinary entrepreneurs that are on the cutting-edge. That's who we are. That's what we do. And if we keep on doing it, nothing is going to stop us.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause.)

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1:27 P.M. PDT