



# NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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## DOE APPROVES VOLUNTEER STATE SOLAR INITIATIVE

**NASHVILLE** — U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Steven Chu today confirmed funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support the Volunteer State Solar Initiative in Tennessee. Under DOE's State Energy Program, Governor Phil Bredesen has proposed a statewide plan that prioritizes energy savings, creates or retains jobs, increases the use of renewable energy, and reduces carbon pollution.

"This funding will provide an important boost for the state's economy, help to put Americans back to work, and move us toward energy independence," said Secretary Chu. "It reflects our commitment to support innovative state and local strategies to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy while insisting that taxpayer dollars be spent responsibly."

Bredesen said he was gratified by the Obama administration's support. "Tennessee has enjoyed considerable success in recruiting solar jobs to our state," Bredesen said, citing recent multi-billion-dollar investments by solar-industry firms Hemlock Semiconductor and Wacker Chemie AG. "Our new initiative, funded by the Recovery Act, will help ensure that we have bright prospects for continued clean-energy job growth."

Tennessee is receiving 40 percent of its total State Energy Program (SEP) Recovery Act funding immediately. The initial 10 percent of total funding was previously available to support planning activities; the remaining 50 percent of funds will be released once the state meets reporting, oversight, and accountability milestones required by the Recovery Act. After demonstrating successful implementation of its plan, the state will receive \$31 million in additional funding, for a total of nearly \$62.5 million.

Tennessee will use its State Energy Program Recovery Act funds to establish the Volunteer State Solar Initiative, a comprehensive solar energy and economic development program, focusing on job creation, education, renewable power production, and technology commercialization. Building upon current efforts, this program will stimulate short-term economic growth, while positioning the state to support long-term expansion of the solar industry. Recovery Act funds will enable the state to accelerate national market transformation in a manner that will create jobs and ensure a clean energy future.

The initiative consists of two projects: The Tennessee Solar Institute at the University of Tennessee (UT) and Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), which will focus on industry partnerships to improve the affordability and efficiency of solar products; and the West Tennessee Solar Farm, a five-megawatt 20-acre power generation facility in Haywood County that will be one of the largest installations in the Southeast and serve as a demonstration tool for education and economic development.

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## TENNESSEE SOLAR INSTITUTE

The Tennessee Solar Institute at UT and ORNL will be a center for excellence to spur accelerated growth in Tennessee's burgeoning solar industry and serve as a crossroads for a wide-range of solar-related activities in the Volunteer State. Among other purposes, the institute will bring together scientists, engineers and technical experts with business leaders, policymakers and industry workers to help speed the improvement and deployment of solar photovoltaic (PV) technology.

Basic research activities will be conducted using state energy funds to be designated to UT and ORNL, outside of the Recovery Act. However, for the purposes of establishing industry relationships and leveraging federal Recovery Act dollars, the institute will create a "Solar Opportunity Fund" to underwrite a series of new innovation and installation grants. Over the next three years, approximately \$23.5 million in grants will be distributed to solar-industry firms looking to strengthen or expand their operations as well as businesses looking to install solar-energy generation systems.

"Innovation Grants" will encourage growth of Tennessee's solar industry by providing funds to the state's solar industry firms for technical assistance, facility or process improvements, and workforce development. "Installation Grants" will speed the deployment of solar energy statewide through grants to businesses to fund the purchase and installation of small-scale solar photovoltaic systems.

"The Solar Opportunity Fund gives us a meaningful tool in the toolbox to help recruit additional solar firms to Tennessee as well as help those that are already here keep growing," said Economic and Community Development Commissioner Matt Kisber, whose agency will oversee the institute's efforts. "At the end of the day, it's about creating jobs and promoting a clean energy future."

## WEST TENNESSEE SOLAR FARM

Additionally, Tennessee will use its Recovery Act funds to establish the West Tennessee Solar Farm, a five-megawatt solar array in Haywood County, Tennessee. The Solar Farm will serve as a demonstration site for educational purposes for the public and students to learn about the benefits of renewable energy. It also will be a showcase for a range of commercially available solar techniques and technologies. This program will be primarily administered by UT. Under a preliminary agreement, the federal Tennessee Valley Authority will purchase power generated by the Farm at a renewable energy price. Prior to its development, the Solar Farm will be subject to an environmental review for federally funded projects under the National Energy Policy Act (NEPA).

The farm, to be located at a site along Interstate 40 near the Haywood County industrial megasite, will be Tennessee's largest solar installation and one of the largest in the Southeast. Demonstrating the zero-carbon production of electricity on a highly visible and significant scale is expected to encourage future renewable-energy interest and investments.

As part of revised plans, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) will control the property for the farm in order to develop a pull-through interstate welcome center that will serve as an educational site for the public and students to learn about renewable energy. In addition to its education mission, the farm will serve as a showcase for Tennessee-made solar products and components. Land acquisition and construction will be funded outside the Recovery Act.

According to DOE, the net result of the Volunteer State Solar Initiative will be to advance solar technology, promote the use of renewable energy statewide, lower fossil fuel emissions, decrease the state's dependence on foreign oil, and create green jobs across Tennessee

"Short-term, our new Recovery Act program supports jobs in the manufacturing and installation sectors of the solar industry," Bredesen added. "Long-term, it strengthens Tennessee's reputation as a national clean-energy hub and emerging force in the U.S. solar industry."