

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks Prior to a Roundtable Discussion on Renewable Energy and Climate Change and an Exchange With Reporters at the Department of Energy

March 19, 2015

The President. Well, it is wonderful to be here at the Department of Energy with some of our outstanding private sector partners. Secretary Ernie Moniz is in Geneva doing some important work on behalf of our national security, but I want to thank him and his team at the Department of Energy, as well as our folks over at EPA. And Secretary—or Administrator Gina McCarthy is here, as well as Christy Goldfuss at the Council on Environmental Quality.

This has been a team effort to make sure that we are doing everything we can to boost the energy efficiency of the American economy. And since we've said it's important, we thought it was important for us to lead by example here at the Federal Government. As you know, I just took a tour of the solar-powered roof upstairs. And those panels are not just for show, they produce power that the Government doesn't then have to buy off the grid. And more and more businesses and more and more homeowners are following suit not because it's simply good for the environment, but because it's good for their bottom lines.

Thanks in part to the investments that we've made over the past 6 years, the United States is rapidly becoming a leader in solar energy. Last year was the biggest year for solar power in our history. And in fact, the solar industry is adding jobs 10 times faster than the economy as a whole.

So we're proving that it is possible to grow our economy robustly, while at the same time, doing the right thing for our environment and tackling climate change in a serious way.

Over the past 6 years, we've done more than ever to combat climate change. Last year, the Federal Government used less energy than at any time in the past four decades. And in a historic joint announcement that many of you saw, China committed to limiting their emissions for the first time.

So today America once again is going to be leading by example. This morning I signed an Executive order that will do two things. First, we're going to cut the Federal Government's greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent from the 2008 levels within the next 10 years. Second, we're going to increase the share of electricity that the Federal Government uses from renewable sources to 30 percent within the next 10 years. These are ambitious goals, but we know that they're achievable goals.

And I want to thank the executives of some of our leading companies in the country who are here, because they're stepping up and making similar commitments. Folks from IBM to GE, Northrop Grumman, some of our biggest Fortune 100 companies are setting their own ambitious goals. And cumulatively, what this is doing is allowing us across the economy to not only hit some key targets that are going to be required in order for us to reduce climate change, but they're also saving money, helping their bottom line, and they're giving a boost to the industry as a whole. Because as we get economies of scale and demand for solar and wind and other renewable energies grows, obviously, that can help drive down the overall price, make it that much more efficient, and we start getting a virtuous cycle that is good for the environment and creates jobs here in America.

So we very much want to thank our private sector partners. You guys have done an outstanding job. And because of the prominence of many of the companies here and the fact that they've got a whole bunch of suppliers up and down the chain, what you do with respect to energy efficiency is going to have a ripple effect throughout the economy. And we're very pleased with that.

So thank you very much. Thanks, everybody. Thank you, guys.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/Iran

Q. Have you spoken to Prime Minister Netanyahu—[inaudible]?

The President. Thanks, everybody.

Q.—the Iran talks—[inaudible]?

The President. Thank you, guys. I'm sorry, we were talking about energy, and it's a great story. [Laughter] So, hopefully, you'll focus on it. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Christy Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality. He also referred to Executive Order 13693.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Renewable energy and climate change, roundtable discussion at the Department of Energy; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Department of Energy.

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