

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 2, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Dr. Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Salazar and Secretary Chu:

It has come to our attention that the Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon will not be held on the National Mall in 2011 or any future year. We are very concerned by this sudden change in location since it is the key venue to educate Congress and the public about solar energy. We ask that you reconsider your decision so solar energy can take its rightful place on the nation's center stage.

The National Mall is the only sensible venue to host the Solar Decathlon. The first four wildly successful events were held on the Mall from 2002-2009 and the event grew in popularity each year. As a tourist attraction, it has provided the perfect venue for thousands to learn about solar energy and energy efficiency. And as a central pillar in our quest for clean energy, solar energy deserves a venue that sits adjacent to our country's legislative leaders.

Last week, in his State of the Union Address, President Obama called upon our nation to reach lofty clean energy goals. To move the Solar Decathlon away from the Mall would be sending a mixed signal to the very students who are doing their part to make this lofty goal a reality.

The National Mall is a national treasure, not because of its pristine beauty, but because it serves as a focal point for the nation. The Mall is where Martin Luther King Jr. captured the nation's attention with his "I Have a Dream" speech, where we celebrated our nation's bicentennial, where the Million Man March took place, where the AIDS quilt was displayed, and where we recently celebrated President Obama's historic inauguration. There is no doubt that events like these caused physical damage to the Mall, but their historic, cultural, and political value far outweighed the physical toll they took on the grounds.

The same holds true for the Solar Decathlon. The ability to highlight the role solar energy can play in creating jobs, preserving our environment, and reducing our dependence on foreign energy far outweighs any physical damage the event might cause to the Mall. After all, the Mall is not a nature preserve; it is a place for people.

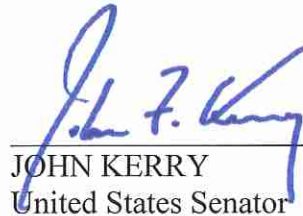
We respectfully request that you reconsider this sudden change and allow the Solar Decathlon to remain on the National Mall. The Solar Decathlon has proven to be a successful program by providing educational opportunities to the students, public, and Congress as well as providing workforce development opportunities for the students, and the National Mall is the prime location to offer these opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of the solar industry.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



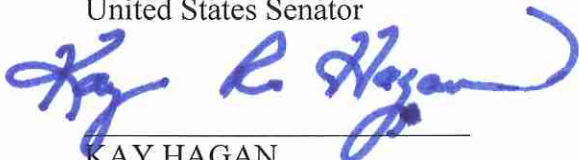
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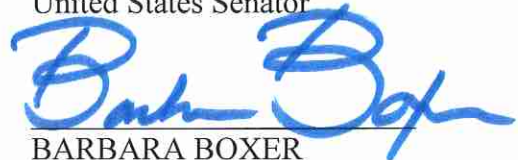
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