

June 29, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The purpose of this letter is to call to your attention a critical need that must be met in order that the goals of your Administration's energy policy, and those of the energy industry in the United States, can be met. We urge you to direct an allocation of radio frequency (RF) spectrum for electric utilities to enable the deployment of an advanced, intelligent energy infrastructure the Nation needs for the monitoring, controlling and managing of how electricity is generated, distributed, and consumed by all Americans.

You may already know that electric utilities are dependent on expansive, internally built/owned/operated communications infrastructure. These networks are the most robust – designed to work through outages without interruption and aid in restoration – and they are more ubiquitous, since our crews perform extremely hazardous work everywhere we have electric wires.

Electric utilities seeking to deploy smart grids are facing many great challenges. One of those challenges is the communications data network capacity needed to achieve smart grids. Today, utilities that have embarked on the Smart Grid journey rely on several disparate communication data network solutions that are either too costly, non-scalable, and/or lack security capabilities to reach all customers.

In order for electric utilities to manage the increasing demands placed on our current networks securely and reliably, and to enable secure, reliable, and scalable smart grid deployments reaching every customer, we must have access to at least 30 MHz of dedicated radio spectrum on a nationwide basis.

There are many factors that depend on the birth of the "smart grid:" distributed generation; distributed storage; plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and electric vehicles; smart appliances; new transmission highways; self-healing distribution micro-grids; empowered consumers managing their own energy use; empowered consumers producing and selling energy; and more. Utilities know that all these will require information communications technology (ICT) applications that must run on networks, in most cases advanced versions of the private networks they already operate.

Mr. President, Electric Utilities do not have the best communications data network needed to make the Smart Grid happen for every customer across the nation.

Other nations are already seeing and meeting this need. Industry Canada, the spectrum regulatory agency of our northern neighbor, already has allocated 30 MHz of spectrum for the support and improvement of the electric grid there. Since we have a North American electric grid, harmonization of this allocation (the 1800-1830 MHz frequency band) to handle our future communications needs could be ideal. The European Commission, too, is examining the importance of ICT networks for the smart grid, and the need for utility spectrum to support this goal.

We note with great optimism that the importance of interference-free spectrum to utilities was highlighted in the Electric Power Research Institute's June 17, 2009 draft report to the National Institute of Standards and Technology on the Smart Grid Interoperability Standards Roadmap (pages 94-95).

We believe that the Departments of Energy and Commerce should be allowed to act directly on this recommendation.

As American electric utility Chief Information Officers, Chief Technology Officers, and Executives charged with building the nation's smart grids, we call on your Administration to give electric utilities access to dedicated spectrum, enabling us to deliver the next generation of energy services. And at the same time, our technology partners will be empowered to deliver the new hardware, software, and solutions, resulting in the build-out of a new Smart Grid economy creating tens of thousands of new jobs.

We urge rapid and concerted action by the Energy and Commerce Departments to partner with electric utilities to meet this need. We recognize and welcome the goal of implementing smart grids expeditiously, and look forward to further discussions with your Administration as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Andres E. Carvallo, Austin Energy, CIO
Dave Webb, Nebraska Public Power District, CIO
David Gordon, Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company, CIO
Wanyonyi Kendrick, Jacksonville Electric Authority, CIO
Don Cortez, Centerpoint Energy, VP Technology
Rick Jarrell, Santee Cooper, CIO
Christopher Barron, CPS Energy, CIO
Tom Iwanski, Platte River Power Authority, CIO
Michael Harris, Clark Public Power Utilities, CIO
Eddy Hernandez, Brownsville Public Utilities Board, CIO
Greg Rodeghier, Orlando Utilities Commission, CIO
Martha Hobson, Snohomish County Public Utility District, CIO
Michael Harvey, Long Island Power Authority, Sr. VP Operations
Dawn Roth, Colorado Springs Utilities, CIO
James Stanfield, Lakeland Electric, General Manager
Verlyn Kroon, Omaha Public Power District, CIO
Ray Arellano, Tacoma Public Utilities, CIO
Ron King, MEAG Power, CIO
Barbara Hoffnagle, Salt River Project, CIO
Vijay George, Lower Colorado River Authority, CIO
Eduardo Bresani, Toronto Hydro, CIO
Beth Perlman, Constellation Energy, SVP and CIO
Richard Burchfield, Baltimore Gas & Electric, CIO

cc: Gary Locke, Secretary, Department of Commerce
Steven Chu, Secretary, Department of Energy
Michael Copps, Acting Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
Carol Browner, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change