

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 4, 2008

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Solar Advocates Applaud Gov. Crist and Legislature for Renewable Energy Push

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— As the price of oil breaks \$100 a barrel and economic experts forecast \$4-per-gallon gasoline, Gov. Charlie Crist has urged the Legislature to move forcefully to embrace alternative, renewable energy sources during the 2008 Legislative Session – a move receiving enthusiastic praise from the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association and The Vote Solar Initiative.

During his annual State of the State address, Gov. Crist noted that Florida is special because much of the state's economy relies on the environment. He challenged lawmakers to make a strong commitment to promoting clean technology, just as the state has done for biotechnology. Florida's solar energy advocates saluted Gov. Crist for his leadership.

“The sun is a year-round power source that can provide Floridians with energy at the speed of light. It makes sense for the Sunshine State to make smart moves to diversify our power supply by tapping this unlimited energy source,” said Bruce Kershner with the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association. “We applaud Gov. Crist for his visionary leadership in recognizing that America cannot continue to send hundreds of billions of dollars overseas each year to feed our addiction to foreign oil. We're encouraged that, even in the face of significant challenges, there are outstanding leaders in the Legislature who are committed to making Florida the seat of jobs and opportunity in the Twenty-First Century renewable energy industry.”

During his opening address today, Florida Senate President Ken Pruitt also underscored the importance of promoting renewable energy saying, “We must realize that increasing Florida's energy independence can only benefit our state. Let us forge ahead on alternative energy policy so that we can leave a healthy and vibrant Florida for our children and their children.”

Solar energy advocates also pointed to Speaker Rubio's comments during a recent interview on Florida Public Radio where Rubio cited the state's dedication of “seed money” to foster growth in the biotechnology sector as an example of the opportunity now available to spur innovation in Florida's fledgling clean energy sector.

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“I believe that, and I think most people now are coming to the conclusion, that the solution to global warming, the solution to our energy dependence, is technological advances in the production and efficiency in the use of energy. And that's not going to happen through government mandates. That's going to happen through the American innovator,” Speaker Rubio said on the Feb. 13 edition of the program Florida on the Line. “People are going to invent new sources of energy. That industry is going to be based somewhere. I hope it's based in Florida. I hope those innovations happen here.”

The opening of the 2008 legislative session coincided with the Florida Public Service Commission's (PSC) approval of a “net metering” rule. This new rule will promote the use of solar energy among consumers and create a more robust solar energy industry in Florida.

Net metering is a type of billing where customers who create their own energy with solar electric systems will be able to send any excess power back to the utility and receive billing credit. Florida's new net metering regulation allows consumers who install solar electric systems to receive virtually the same dollar amount as the utility for each kilowatt they create.

Under the new rule, when a consumer generates more energy than they consume, a credit will appear in the next billing cycle. Credits will accumulate and continue to offset customer billing for 12 months, after which any remaining credit will be paid to the customer at the utility's "avoided cost."

“This is a watershed day in the history of solar energy in Florida,” said Gwen Rose with The Vote Solar Initiative. “By taking action to promote Florida's emerging solar energy industry, Gov. Charlie Crist and the Florida Legislature can blaze a new trail to promote real energy independence in the Sunshine State.”

For more information on solar energy in Florida, please visit the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association Web site at www.flaseia.org and The Vote Solar Initiative Web site at <http://www.votesolar.org/state-initiatives/florida.html>.

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