

# Remarks at Jobs and Competitiveness Round Table, Durham, North Carolina

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**Commerce Secretary Gary Locke**

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Hello everybody, it's great to be here, and I'm excited for our discussion today.

It's never been more important, as our economy recovers from the most severe economic recession in generations, that government and business come together to find new and innovative ways to foster growth and create jobs.

This Council's focus on the education and training of America's workforce is an important one for our country. Only if our workers have the best skills will it be possible for the U.S. to compete – and win – in the global economy.

And many of the good, high-paying jobs of the future will be created by green-tech companies like our host today, Cree, Inc.

Later today, President Obama will discuss the value of this growing industry, but for now let me just note a few steps we're taking to hasten the development of a key sector of tomorrow's clean energy economy – the Smart Grid.

- This grid will:
  - manage the electrical load to avoid outages;
  - empower consumers to make smart choices about their energy usage and save money on their utility bills;
  - enable innovators and entrepreneurs to develop new products and services – like smartphone-controlled thermostats or websites that show household energy use – that create both benefits to consumers and the jobs of the future; and
  - rely on stringent efficiency standards for buildings and appliances that will allow consumers to sell surplus energy back to the grid

Already, the Recovery Act is investing \$4.5 billion in 140 smart grid projects across the country – matched by over \$5.5 billion in private and local funding – to take America into a new age of energy infrastructure.

But we can, and must, do more.

To chart that path forward, we have a duty to tackle four issues. These are the areas I encourage us to focus on today.

To ensure the grid's success, we must:

- “Scale what works” to enable smart grid investments that are cost-effective;
- Come up with open standards to unlock the innovation potential in the electricity sector;
- Secure the grid against natural or other disasters; and
- Empower consumers with education, access to their own energy usage information and improved privacy safeguards and consumer protections.

Back in Washington today, the administration launched our new National Smart Grid Strategy.

The policy framework produced today charts a path forward for the effective use of smart grid technologies, building on those historic Recovery Act investments I mentioned earlier.

Today, the group is holding a working summit at the White House to accelerate the rollout of the Smart Grid.

Clearly this is an issue this administration takes seriously, as everyone in this room does. If we get this right ... if government and business can team up effectively ... we have an almost unprecedented opportunity to change how we use electricity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create new jobs in an emerging industry.

So I look forward to that conversation with you, as we take this historic challenge head on.