Dear Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Lewis, Vice Chairman Pastor, and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

We send this letter to voice our strong support for the $300 million in funding for the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E) outlined in the President’s Budget and authorized in Section 5012 of the America COMPETES Act originally led by Congressman Gordon. The 2011 budget marks the inaugural funding cycle for this program.

The APRA-E program is designed to complement other DOE programs put forth by the Office of Science, various applied energy offices, national labs, and the upcoming Energy Innovation HUBs. All of these programs are multifaceted; as a result it is encouraged that the Office of the Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office, as well as other internal review procedures are utilized to provide comprehensive oversight.

The original model for ARPA-E was the Department of Defense’s highly successful DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency). Like DARPA, ARPA-E is staffed with core group of world-class technical performers and has been organized to be highly flexible and highly efficient. This culture within DARPA had created previous successes, such as the Internet, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and stealth plane technology. During each of these projects the United States turned to our vast pool of innovators and entrepreneurs to create technical solutions. It is with a sense of urgency that we again turn to our best and brightest to enter the international race to develop clean energy technologies.

These technologies span many areas and have the common goal of enhancing the overall security of the United States through developments that will reduce energy imports, improve energy efficiency, and reduce energy-related emissions. By the very nature of the ARPA-E program, funding is directed to so-called “high risk-high reward” projects that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of the uncertainty involved. Instead, these projects can be pursued through private/public partnerships are encouraged through cost-sharing agreements within
ARPA-E. Allowing private investment for projects under the APRA-E program is placing these technologies on the fast track to full scale deployment.

If just a fraction of the projects funded by ARPA-E are successful in reaching the marketplace, the U.S. will benefit greatly by creating new jobs, improving our energy security, saving consumers money by reducing their energy costs, and helping to reduce energy related emissions. We urge you and your colleagues on the Committee to fund the ARPA-E program for the full requested amount of $300 million.

Sincerely,

Jay Inslee, Member of Congress
Rush Holt, Member of Congress
Paul Tonko, Member of Congress

Steve Cohen, Member of Congress
Jim McDermott, Member of Congress
Betsy Markey, Member of Congress

Sander Levin, Member of Congress
Raul Grijalva, Member of Congress
Martin Heinrich, Member of Congress

Tom Perriello, Member of Congress
Mazie Hirono, Member of Congress
Chris Van Hollen, Member of Congress
Russ Carnahan, Member of Congress
Betty Sutton, Member of Congress
Gabrielle Giffords, Member of Congress

Henry Waxman, Member of Congress
David Wu, Member of Congress
Brian Baird, Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin, Member of Congress
Anna Eshoo, Member of Congress
Mike Thompson, Member of Congress

Jared Polis, Member of Congress