Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to invite you to participate in a virtual meeting, Growing Crops and Energy: Why Policymakers are Essential to Overcoming Barriers. The meeting is sponsored by The Council of State Governments Midwest-Canada Energy Subcommittee and is a follow-up to a meeting held in July on the new energy economy.

The meeting will be held on Monday, September 21, 2020, beginning at 10:00 a.m. EDT/9:00 a.m. CDT/8:00 a.m. MDT.

We hope this meeting will provide strategies and policy options for successfully overcoming some of the barriers to entry into clean energy production for farmers and rural areas. The attached agenda has more details. As before, the University of Minnesota’s Institute on the Environment, in cooperation with Germany’s Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, assisted in developing the program. Experts from Germany will participate in the breakout sessions.

This meeting will focus on the issues related to distributed generation, especially electricity that is generated by farmers and in rural areas. Distributed solar generation has been growing along with utility-scale solar.

Speakers will discuss some of the barriers to small-scale solar installations – such as certain net-metering rules, connecting to the grid, and tax and land use issues – and how they overcame these challenges. While this is a virtual meeting, there will be several small breakout sessions that will give state and provincial legislators time to share their knowledge and concerns with colleagues from across the region.

Please register for the meeting on-line at https://forms.gle/qV8g2abKomh9CiNp8. There is no registration fee, but be sure to select your preferences for the concurrent session.

Please feel free to share this invitation and preliminary agenda with your colleagues who might have an interest in these issues.

Sincerely,

MLA Dan D’Autremont, Saskatchewan, Chair, MLC Midwest-Canada Energy Subcommittee

Sen. David Senjem, Minnesota, Vice Chair, MLC Midwest-Canada Energy Subcommittee

Rep. Norine Hammond, Illinois, Co-Chair, MLC Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Growing Crops and Energy: Why Policymakers are Essential to Overcoming Barriers

CSG Midwest-Canada Energy Subcommittee
Virtual meeting
Monday, September 21, 2020
*All times Central time zone

Preliminary Agenda

This meeting (a follow-up to the Energy Subcommittee-sponsored one held on July 13-14 of this year) will provide Midwestern state and Canadian provincial legislators from the region with the opportunity to learn how farmers have successfully expanded their role in the production of clean energy, and the barriers they faced and overcame to bring distributed energy onto the grid. Speakers and participants will also discuss some of the policy fixes that may be needed to ensure that barriers to new entrants into the energy market begin to be removed.

This meeting is hosted in cooperation with Germany’s Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy and includes presenters from Germany. Participants will share information about policies in their respective states and provinces and learn about what works for active farmers in Germany and other European countries.

9:00 – 9:15 a.m.  Welcome, introductions, explanation of how this meeting will work

9:15 – 9:30 a.m.  Breakout sessions
The cross-disciplinary nature of agriculture and energy: Why farmers need to pay attention to energy issues and why legislators involved in energy policy need to pay attention to agriculture.

9:30 – 10:10 a.m.  Traditional Crops plus New Energy Crops: How an Entrepreneurial Colorado Farmer is Making His Farm Operate Economically
Jack’s Solar Garden, with 1.2 megawatts of production, will be the largest commercial “agrivoltaic” system in the country. The owner, Byron Kominek, will grow crops under the solar panels and sell energy locally. He will discuss his project and the barriers he faced to bring the solar garden’s energy production onto the grid and how he did it. Presentation followed by Q&A.
Speaker: Mr. Byron Kominek, Owner, Jack’s Solar Garden

A fourth-generation family farmer, the presenter is also a solar energy developer who has installed over 100 megawatts of solar projects. He will discuss his experiences working with farmers to install solar panels and some of the regulatory, finance and tax policy challenges to making small-scale solar energy production possible. Presentation followed by Q&A.
Speaker: Mr. Ralph Kaehler, Farmer and Solar Energy Developer

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10:30 – 11:05 a.m. Breakout Sessions
How do you overcome the challenges presented by the speakers through policy solutions? Interactive breakout sessions, led by policy experts, will focus on the following topics:

- Net-metering for smaller producers and other options for connecting to the grid for larger distributed energy producers
- Access to the grid and access fees
- Land use/siting
- Taxation
- State standards/definitions (e.g. how to define key concepts such as “solar farm apiary” “solar farm grazing” etc.)

Note: One German policymaker in each room to expand range of potential policy solutions for participating states and provinces. Moderators will call on Global Renewables Council legislator members for their solutions.

11:05 – 11:15 a.m. Break

11:15 – 11:30 a.m. Reports from each breakout room

11:30 – 11:45 a.m. The Policy Big Picture: Relevant Policies for Farmers and Rural Areas to Succeed in the New Energy Economy
The “How, What, Where, When and Why” of barriers to “Growing Energy” generation and distribution for the benefit of both rural and urban residents. How to ease or remove these barriers in the system to provide for producers both small and large.

Speaker: Mr. Dan Lipschultz, principal of Lipschultz Energy and Communications Consulting and recent Minnesota Public Utilities Commissioner

Dan Lipschultz is the principal of Lipschultz Energy and Communications Consulting and a recent commissioner and vice chair of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. His six-year term ended in January 2020. As commissioner, Lipschultz participated in a number of resource planning and other decisions facilitating and shaping the clean energy transition under way in Minnesota’s electric utility sector. Prior to serving on the Commission, Lipschultz practiced energy and telecommunications law for over 25 years as both a public and private sector attorney.

11:45 – 11:55 a.m. Sharing around the room
What is your next step, what resources do you need?

11:55 a.m. – noon Wrap up/closing comments

12:00 – 12:10 p.m. Closing – optional social time