

August 15, 2003

Secretary Tom Ridge
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Ridge:

Yesterday's devastating electricity shut down in New York City, Cleveland, Detroit, and sections of Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and other areas, which reportedly affected some 50 million people, has dramatically demonstrated the vulnerability of a key aspect of our nation's critical infrastructure – the electrical power grids which are essential to the health and safety of the public and the viability of our economy. The Department of Homeland Security must work quickly with other agencies, and energy companies, to understand what happened and take the steps necessary to protect the energy sector, and all of our critical infrastructure.

Experts have warned for years that our critical infrastructure – 85% of which is owned by the private sector - is vulnerable to disruption. So it is disconcerting that the President would describe yesterday's events as a "wake up call" to modernize the power grid. The Administration should also wake up to the need to protect our critical infrastructure from disruption by intentional attacks from terrorists. The reality is that the Administration has simply failed to provide the leadership or resources necessary to get the job done. At this point, the Administration still appears not to have even identified the list of potential critical infrastructure targets we need to protect; much less evaluated how vulnerable these assets are, or developed or implemented systematic measures to protect them.

In March 2003, I requested that you provide a complete accounting of the Administration's efforts to protect our nation's critical infrastructure and to evaluate its vulnerabilities. I asked for detailed information about the Administration's efforts to inventory our critical assets across the thirteen key critical infrastructure sectors, including energy, agriculture, water, information and telecommunications, banking and finance, chemicals and hazardous materials, and others. I requested information about the status of vulnerability and risk assessments being conducted in each sector, as well as the protective measures that have been taken to reduce the vulnerabilities. I also questioned the Administration's conclusion in its *National Strategy for Homeland Security* that the private sector has sufficient market incentives

to ensure that these assets are adequately safeguarded. To date, I have not received a response to that inquiry. I am urging you, once again, to provide answers to these questions.

I am also dismayed that the Administration requested only \$500 million to study critical infrastructure vulnerabilities in FY 04: this is clearly too few resources and too sluggish a pace for such a vital task; we need to get these assessments done at once so that actual protective measures can be put in place.

The Administration has stated that yesterday's blackout is unrelated to terrorism. However, Richard Clarke, the former special adviser to the President for cyber security, has cautioned that we may not know enough yet to reach that conclusion. Even if the initial assessments are verified, these events have provided a stark illustration of what could happen if terrorists successfully disrupted the power grids in major American cities, either through physical attacks or cyber attacks. We already know that terrorist groups have indicated a desire to do just that.

Electricity is not just another commodity. It's an essential service and we need to make sure it is reliable. This blackout demonstrates the total dependence of our way of life on critical infrastructure - in this case the electric power grid - and vigorous efforts are needed by DHS and others to protect it from physical or cyber attacks. Whatever measures we take to protect critical infrastructure from a terrorist attack will inevitably provide benefits in protecting that infrastructure in the event of disruption due to other forces. I strongly urge you to act quickly to get this job done.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member