

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, RANKING MEMBER

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“Cutting the Federal Government’s Energy Bill: An Examination of the
Sustainable Federal Government Executive Order”

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Senator Carper, thank you for holding this hearing today. It is important that we critically examine the President’s Executive Order directing agencies to reduce energy consumption and implement sustainable practices. We must ensure that the policy promotes environmental responsibility in a fiscally responsible manner.

The federal government is the largest institutional consumer of energy in the world. In 2008, its total energy bill topped \$24 billion. Over \$7 billion alone was expended on energy costs to operate federal buildings. Prior administrations have issued executive orders aimed at shrinking federal energy consumption and reducing related spending. The current Executive Order seeks to build upon those efforts by fully integrating sustainable practices into overall agency mission and budgetary considerations.

Of course, this order will not be implemented in a vacuum. Our nation continues to endure economic hardships as our national debt climbs to new record highs. The Senate may soon be facing a vote to increase the federal debt limit to \$14.3 trillion dollars -- a \$1.9 trillion dollar increase, the largest ever. The American taxpayers are demanding that Congress rein in out-of-control spending and make reduction of the federal debt a top priority. To accomplish this goal, agencies will inevitably be forced to operate on leaner budgets.

While I appreciate that investments in renewable energy and green building design are important parts of any comprehensive sustainability strategy, we must take economic factors into account. Future investments in energy sustainability must remain cost-effective and be able to provide a consistent return in energy savings.

In closing, there is obvious opportunity for the federal government to lead by example. But just as dangers lurk in doing too little, there is peril in going too far, too fast, in a way that imposes undue burden on our federal agencies in a time of economic crisis. The Executive Order demands that energy efficiency become a fully integrated consideration in each agency's mission in the future. However, implementing that Order must not be made at the expense of their most pressing priorities today.

I hope our witnesses will be able to shed some light on how that may be accomplished.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.