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February 1, 2010

Dear President Obama,

Your State of the Union speech last week laudably referenced clean tech and renewable energy several times. We ask that you follow your words with action, by leading the transition to a post-carbon economy and a healthier world.

You also spoke of our need to face hard truths.

Hard truth: Our continued, willful reliance on fossil fuels is making our planet uninhabitable. *We are evicting ourselves from the only paradise we've ever known.*

Hard truth: No combination of current and anticipated renewable sources can maintain our profligate energy usage as the global supply of fossil fuels heads for terminal decline.

For the recently released *Searching for a Miracle*, Post Carbon Institute Senior Fellow Richard Heinberg conducted a "net energy" analysis of 18 different energy sources (including nuclear and "clean coal"). He concluded that the amount of energy available after accounting for the energy used in extraction and production of those sources is—at our current and anticipated rates of consumption—insufficient to get us over the hump" to a post-carbon world.

Our 29 Post Carbon Institute Fellows—experts in the leading economic, energy, and environmental issues of the day—all agree that this "net energy" deficit is just one of many interrelated crises shaping the 21st century. Each crisis alone creates formidable challenges; in combination, their complexity admits no simple solution. But given their direness, inaction risks tragedy.

Mr. President, we respect you and your advisors and appreciate the enormity of the dilemmas you and all of us confront. When a great leader frames a great challenge, a resilient people will rise to meet the opportunity. And so we ask, Mr. President, that you tell the American people that we must:

1. **Face reality.** In a carbon-constrained world, true prosperity comes not from heedless growth, but from shared security, community, and liberty.
2. **Prepare for the future.** Conservation, with an emphasis on building a green economy and revitalizing struggling communities, offers cost-effective "found" energy, and the most immediate and long-term return on investment.



3. **Lead the way.** A substantial investment in renewable energy, with an emphasis on distributed solar and wind, offers the best hope for moving to a sustainable economy and environment.

Mr. President, lead us in creating a future worth inheriting. Post Carbon Institute and our Fellows will support you and your team in whatever capacity we can. We believe that the American people, and the world's people, will support you as well.

With hope,



Asher Miller
Executive Director

