

Obama Space Team Seeks Public Comment on Space Solar Power

Contributed by Jeff Krukin
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With all the public attention on matters of the environment, energy, and resource depletion, I've long maintained that the space community needs to connect space with these issues in a reasonable manner. This is the only way to develop space advocates among those who don't care about or see any value in traditional space exploration.

A huge step has been taken in this direction by the Space Frontier Foundation... of course.

The following is taken from today's Space Frontier Foundation press release, "Obama Space Team Seeks Public Comment on Space Solar Power White Paper Submitted by Space Frontier Foundation:"

The Space Frontier Foundation pointed out that President-elect Obama's transition team has published for public comment a white paper entitled Space Solar Power (SSP) - A Solution for Energy Independence & Climate Change. The paper was prepared and submitted by the Space Frontier Foundation and other citizen space advocates, and calls for the new Administration to make development of Space Solar Power a national priority.

The SSP white paper was among the first ten released by the Obama transition team. It is the first and only space-related white paper released by the transition team to date. With 140 comments thus far, it is already among the top five most-discussed of the 20-some white papers on Change.gov.

Foundation Chairman Berin Szoka called upon all Americans to join the discussion about Space Solar Power at Change.gov: "For over twenty years, the Space Frontier Foundation has championed Space Solar Power as a world-changing technology that could do more to improve life here on Earth than any space program or commercial space venture ever. We applaud the Obama transition team's interest in developing Space Solar Power as a clean energy source that could significantly reduce U.S. dependence on strategically vulnerable energy sources."

The Foundation was created in 1988 to advocate for the space industrialization and space settlement ideas of Princeton Physicist Dr. Gerard O'Neill's Space Studies Institute, including Space Solar Power. The Foundation has testified three times (in 1995, 1997 and 1998) to the U.S. Congress in support of Space Solar Power. In 2000, the Foundation completed a \$100,000 project for NASA on Assessment, Outreach, and Future Research of Environmental and Safety Factors related to Space Solar Power. Most recently, the Foundation has sponsored a public discussion to generate input for the National Security Space Office's SSP study, published in October 2007, which concluded that SSP had "enormous potential."

"Harnessing Space Solar Power is a huge challenge," Szoka said. "While we support a national initiative for Space Solar Power, we do not support, nor can the taxpayers afford, another massively expensive 'White Elephant' government space program. Only real 'Change' in how we pursue national space objectives can make SSP competitive with other energy sources. We believe the private sector will eventually develop SSP - the only questions are how long it takes and which country will lead. The government cannot economically develop SSP on its own, but it can assist the U.S. private sector by funding basic R&D, creating the right investment incentives, and buying SSP for its own needs. Such an unprecedented collaboration between the private and public sectors could build not just another program, but a new, green industry that would create large numbers of high-paying jobs for American citizens. Someday, well into this century, the SSP industry could even turn America into a net energy exporter."

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