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April 15, 2011

Dr. Stephen Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Forrestal
Washington, DC 205

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Coal Utilization Research Council (CURC) appreciates this opportunity to comment upon the Department's draft Strategic Plan. We understand that the purpose of the plan is to set forth a strategy for the development of a robust portfolio approach to transforming our Nation's energy economy through investments in the research and development of new technologies and the deployment of innovative approaches that might transform our energy economy.

We commend the Department's leadership in supporting the creation and development of clean energy technologies for our future. While the DOE Strategic Plan describes a number of goals and priority initiatives including a focus on nuclear security, environmental management, and basic research, we strongly encourage this Plan also be focused upon the contributions that our most abundant domestic fossil fuel resource – coal – can and should play in achieving and maintaining a secure, environmentally acceptable and cost effective energy future.

Our economy is powered by affordable and reliable electricity. We have more than twice the coal reserves of any other country and our nearly 200+ year supply of domestic coal, at current rates of consumption, should mean that coal will remain a primary energy resource for scores of decades, if not centuries, to come. It is important that any stratetic plan recognize the importance of this domestic resource to our energy security. Further, it is coal that fuels the generation of the country's low cost electricity which, in turn, insures the competitiveness of American goods in international markets. Also, we have merely scratched the surface with respect to the role that coal could play in providing other vital liquid and gaseous fuels for our country as well as feedstocks for American industry.

We recognize that a primary challenge to the long term use of coal is assurance that our national environmental goals are achieved concurrent with continued reliance upon this abundant resource. One immediate issue is that coal generates higher emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) than other energy sources. The DOE's program of research development and demonstration must be supportive of efforts to insure that technologies are developed and available to prevent or capture and control carbon dioxide emissions from all of our fossil fuels, including coal. Future environmental challenges to the long-term use of coal may also be forthcoming and technology has been and will be the key to addressing those challenges. A strategic plan that recognizes the central role of the Department in creating technology solutions to those challenges is very important.

We thank you for the leadership of the Department of Energy in on-going efforts to support the development and utilization of coal resources. Recognition of the importance of coal and inclusion in the Strategic Plan of the Department's continuing commitment to coal related RD&D is requested.

We thank you for your leadership and pledge our continuing support the fossil energy related initiatives of the Department of Energy.

Sincerely,

Ben Yamagata
Executive Director
Coal Utilization Research Council