



# Harnessing Renewable Energy for Job Creation and Growth

## Event

[Discussion](#)

## Date

21 September 2010

## Location

Washington, DC, United States

## Speaker

Jochen Flasbarth (Federal Environment Agency)  
Bernard Sanders

While legislators were introducing a major new bill on renewable electricity in the U.S. Senate on 21 September 2010, a transatlantic lunch in the U.S. Capitol Building convened two veterans of the debate on clean energy reform for an exchange of lessons learned and future opportunities. The lunch, featuring President Jochen Flasbarth of the German Federal Environment Agency and Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont, was sponsored by the United States Association of Former Members of Congress (USAFMC) and Ecologic Institute in Washington DC.

Almost halfway through the first term of the current administration, prospects for a clean energy reform in the United States – one of President Obama's central campaign promises – remain uncertain. Passage of a comprehensive climate bill appears unlikely anytime soon, while a number of state and regional initiatives are facing substantial obstacles. At the federal level, regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) remains politically controversial and stands to face severe delays and judicial challenges. The introduction of a bipartisan bill in the Senate to create the first national renewable electricity standard (RES) is therefore both significant and encouraging.

Even in the absence of an enabling policy framework, however, opportunities to harness the benefits of alternative energy sources are being successfully tapped in the United States. In a lively discussion moderated by R. Andreas Kraemer, President Flasbarth and Senator Sanders affirmed that continued deployment of renewable energy technologies around the world would inevitably spur further innovation and promote economies of scale, improving their competitiveness in global markets as well as in the United States. And as new stakeholders emerge in these industries, political support for stronger policies will automatically follow.

Still, both speakers also voiced a word of caution about the ability to transfer successful policy experiences from Germany and Europe to the United States, where distinct political and economic circumstances require a different response. As President Flasbarth pointed out, "Germany cannot give advice on renewable energy policy; it can only show what is

possible.” Senator Sanders also acknowledged the important role of interest groups seeking to halt or slow down a shift to a cleaner energy economy in the United States. Pointing to a number of successful initiatives in his home state Vermont, however, he expressed confidence in the ability of good environmental policy to also be good economic policy.

Participants and speakers collectively affirmed that climate change and the pursuit of a more sustainable energy system are global challenges, and hence require greater international and transatlantic cooperation.

### **Further links:**

- Ecologic Institute Presentation: [The Divergent Paths of Renewable Energy in Germany and the United States – An Institutional and Cultural Explanation](#)
- Ecologic Institute Presentation: [Energy Infrastructure – How the US and Germany will lead by example](#)
- Ecologic Institute Presentation: [Energy in Germany - Presentation to US Congress Chiefs of Staff](#)
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Transatlantic Media Dialogue: Climate Change and Climate Policy in Europe and the US – Opportunities and Challenges in the Run-Up to the Copenhagen Summit and Beyond](#)
- Ecologic Institute Transatlantic Lunch: [Transatlantic Recovery Plans: Green Jobs for a Cool Planet?](#)
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Transatlantic Exchange on Green Buildings and Architecture](#)
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Informational Visitors Program on Climate Protection and Renewable Energy](#)
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Green Jobs – Green Growth: The New Energy Economy](#)
- Ecologic Institute Publication: [Bypassing Germany’s Reformstau: The Remarkable Rise of Renewable Energy](#)
- [The Worldwatch Institute's Climate and Energy Blog](#)
- [Association of Former Members of Congress](#)

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