



REAL LEADERSHIP FOR RURAL NEVADA

Rural Nevada faces new challenges unlike anything we have witnessed in modern history, but there are also real opportunities for innovation and progress. Rural Americans have demonstrated they can compete in the 21st century, but local initiative must be matched by federal policies that empower them. Taking advantage of these opportunities will depend on electing a president who understands that rural America is important, is willing to provide the leadership, and will prioritize policies that improve the quality of life in rural America.

Barack Obama believes that together we can ensure a bright future for rural Nevada. A senator from a rural state, Barack Obama has worked to ensure rural America's prosperity and vitality. As president, he will help rural Nevada's workers and small businesses thrive. He will:

- **Support Rural Economic Development**
- **Improve Rural Quality of Life**
- **Promote Rural America's Leadership in Developing Renewable Energy**
- **Ensure Economic Opportunity for Family Ranchers**

Obama understands that America is not separated into two countries, one rural and one urban. Across the nation the concerns of Americans are remarkably similar: they want to end the war in Iraq, improve education, guarantee quality health care, and achieve real energy independence. Barack Obama will be the president who does those things – for all Americans.

I. SUPPORT RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support Payment in Lieu of Taxes: In Nevada, more than 87 percent of the land is federally owned. Rural counties depend on the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program to make up for property taxes they cannot collect on federal lands that are located within their boundaries. A consistent supporter of this program, Barack Obama will ensure that our local governments are fairly compensated for losses to their tax base through PILT.

Establish a Small Business and Microenterprise Initiative: Barack Obama will support entrepreneurship and spur job growth by establishing a small business and micro-enterprise initiative for rural America. The program will provide training and technical assistance for rural small business, and a 20 percent tax credit on up to \$50,000 of investment in small owner-operated businesses. This initiative will put the full support of the nation's economic policies behind rural entrepreneurship.

Connect Rural America: Barack Obama will ensure that rural Americans have access to a modern communications infrastructure. Nevada ranked 41st out of 50 states in how many high-speed Internet providers service the state. Some 15 percent of Nevada homes have no access to high-speed Internet at all. Our current telecommunications policy is not serving rural America.

- **Promote Broadband Coverage:** Currently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) collects fees from phone companies that it uses to subsidize lower-cost service in rural areas. Without this support, residents of some areas of the country would have to pay significantly more for telephone services than those living in other areas because of factors such as dense terrain, low populations, or the high fixed costs of building a telecom network. As president, Barack Obama will work with the FCC to reform this program so that it supports affordable broadband coverage across rural America.
- **Better Manage the Nation's Airwaves for More Wireless Access:** To provide affordable wireless access to underserved urban and rural communities, Obama will create incentives to promote more efficient and experimental use of the government's radio spectrum. He will also implement new standards for the commercial spectrum to ensure there is adequate spectrum space for police, ambulances, and other public safety organizations.

Strengthen Mining Industry: The mining industry plays an important role in Nevada's economy, employing some 12,000 people and providing our country with a supply of important minerals. Like many in the mining industry and conservation community, Barack Obama believes we need to update the Mining Law of 1872. He will work with Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) and others to develop reasonable compromise legislation that requires fair compensation for the use of federal land, enhances environmental protection, and cleans up abandoned mines that pollute fish and wildlife habitat. Rewriting this Civil War-era law to reflect 21st century priorities must also provide greater business certainty for mining companies and the communities that depend on the industry.

Help Military Communities: Nevada is proud to be the home of a number of important military installations, such as Nellis Air Force Base, Fallon Naval Air Station, and the Hawthorne Army Depot. Barack Obama supports military communities and understands that military installations have central roles in rural America. In order to ensure that school districts near military bases receive the vital funding they need, Obama supports funding for the Impact Aid Program. Additionally, Obama believes that when the military decides to realign or close installations it must follow a fair and measured process that relies on accurate assessments of the military's needs and our homeland defense capabilities. He also believes that the military has a responsibility to help affected communities get back on their feet with a full range of transitional assistance.

Support Gaming: Up until now, most gaming regulation has been done on the state and local level, and Barack Obama believes this system has worked well. In particular, Nevada has been a model for how states should regulate the gaming industry; the state has harnessed gaming as an engine of economic growth while cracking down on illegal activities. Barack Obama believes that Nevada should continue to control its own destiny. Gaming is critically important to Nevada's economy, creating more than 200,000 lasting jobs and careers in the state.

II. IMPROVE RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE

Combat the Scourge of Methamphetamine: Methamphetamine use has increased by a shocking 156 percent nationwide since 1996. This epidemic is particularly acute in rural areas, and Nevada now has the highest rate of methamphetamine use in the country with abuse three times the national average.

Barack Obama has a long record of fighting the meth epidemic. In the Illinois State Senate, Obama fought for and passed legislation to increase penalties against meth manufacturers, particularly in cases where a child was exposed. In the U.S. Senate, Obama supported the Combat Meth Act of 2005, major parts of which became law in 2006. The bill puts federal funds into the fight against methamphetamine, provides

assistance to children affected by meth abuse, and places restrictions on the sale of the ingredients used to make the drug. As president, he will continue the fight to rid our communities of meth and offer support to help addicts heal.

Obama also will work to cut off drug lab supplies by restricting global imports of precursor chemicals, and he will take on the Mexican drug cartels in partnership with Mexico and other nations in the region. Sadly, the number of women abusing meth has risen significantly in the past few years, which has placed an increased strain on mothers and children in Nevada and other rural states. Barack Obama believes we need to expand family treatment programs where mothers and their children can stay together, so mothers seeking treatment for their addiction are not forced to make a choice between treatment and their children.

Improve Health Care: On many important measures of health, people in rural areas are in poorer health than their urban counterparts. Rural populations, including children, are less likely to have health insurance or good access to doctors and hospitals. The more isolated a rural community, the more difficult it is to ensure the availability of needed health care services. Rural Nevadans must travel an average distance of 114 miles to reach one of Nevada's hospitals. A fundamental challenge facing rural America is stabilizing, sustaining, and strengthening access to affordable, quality health care.

- **Provide Universal Health Care and Lower Health Costs:** A basic problem facing rural America is access to affordable, quality health care. Health insurance premiums in Nevada have increased five times faster than wages over the past six years, leaving many families unable to insure themselves. As a result, there are 417,000 uninsured people in Nevada, including 93,000 children. Barack Obama is committed to signing universal health legislation by the end of his first term in office that ensures all Americans have high-quality, affordable health care coverage. His plan will save a typical American family up to \$2,500 every year on their health care costs.
- **Help Small Businesses Afford Health Care:** Rural economies are dependent upon small business, but small employers often struggle to offer health coverage to their employees because it is too expensive. Today, only 45 percent of Nevada small businesses can afford to offer their employees health insurance. Obama's plan will help small employers unable to offer health coverage to their employees by allowing them to participate in the National Health Insurance Exchange and purchase either a new public plan or a private plan for their employees. Obama's plan will also provide subsidies for those who need them. Very small businesses will be exempted from the plan's requirement to pay into the system.
- **Promote Fairness in Medicare and Medicaid Reimbursement:** Medicare and Medicaid funding systems have historically penalized rural areas. Health care providers in rural areas often get less money for the very same procedure performed in urban areas. These lower reimbursement rates make it difficult for rural areas to recruit and retain doctors. Four of Nevada's rural counties lost physicians between 2002 and 2006. As president, Obama will work to ensure a more equitable Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement structure. Additionally, he will work to expedite the turnaround time on Medicare reimbursements. The long delays in Medicare reimbursements have caused a significant number of rural pharmacies to close their doors.
- **Bring Doctors, Nurses, and Other Health Care Professionals to Rural America:** Rural America faces shortages of providers, making it a challenge for those with health insurance to get the care they need. Two-thirds of the federally designated health professional shortage areas in the United States can be found in rural America. Ten of Nevada's rural counties are currently experiencing health care professional shortages. Barack Obama will attract providers to rural America by creating a loan forgiveness program for doctors and nurses who work in underserved rural areas, and by supporting

programs like the Nevada Rural Hospital Flexibility Program that provides hospitals with additional funding to recruit physicians and keep their doors open. Additionally, he will encourage the expansion of state-of-the-art health professional online education courses to reach potential health professionals across rural America.

- **Expand Community Clinics:** To promote access to preventive, diagnostic and other primary care services, Barack Obama will increase federal capital funds for the building and start-up costs of community health centers. He will also allow them to obtain reimbursement for a portion of their transportation-related costs. Building networks among health care providers in rural areas is important to ensuring care coordination, particularly for the high proportion of elderly who reside in rural areas, often with multiple chronic conditions. Obama's plan to increase efficiency and quality of care includes planning grants for local health providers to coordinate care.
- **Improve Care for Rural Veterans:** Veterans in rural areas have poorer health and less access to care. In many rural parts of the country, the nearest Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility is hundreds of miles away. Nevada veterans lose out on nearly \$15 million a year in federal benefits because of long wait times and a lack of benefits officers, which leads frustrated veterans not to pursue benefits to which they are entitled. Barack Obama will expand the number of Vet Centers, so more veterans can access care more easily. As president, Obama will fight efforts to weaken the VA by irresponsibly outsourcing veterans care to private providers. However, he will also give the VA the tools and flexibility to contract with other providers in any remote area of the country in which the VA determines there is inadequate access to a VA medical center or in which it is impractical to build one. Obama will strengthen the VA's telemedicine infrastructure to expand the delivery of high quality health care to veterans residing in rural communities.
- **Invest in Health Information Technology and Telemedicine:** Obama supports increasing access to care in rural areas by promoting the wider adoption of effective telecommunications and health information technologies. He will invest \$10 billion a year over the next five years to move the U.S. health care system to broad adoption of standards-based electronic health information systems. He will phase in requirements for full implementation of health IT and commit the necessary federal resources to make it happen. Obama will ensure that these systems are developed in coordination with providers and frontline workers, including those in rural and underserved areas. Obama will also expand the use of telemedicine, using communications technology to bring important health care services to isolated rural communities.

Improve Rural Education and Attract and Retain Young People in Rural America: Public schools lie at the heart of rural communities. These schools educate children, serve as local employers, and are social and cultural centers. Nevada has made great strides improving its rural education system: between 1980 and 2000, the share of rural Nevadans who had not completed high school declined from 28 percent to 17.5 percent.

- **Support Rural Teachers:** Rural teachers face many unique challenges, including lack of access to professional development opportunities, preparation for multiple subjects and grade levels, and multiple extracurricular duties. Obama will support rural teachers at all stages of their careers. This means modifying the certification and teacher preparation process so that, for example, a biology major can avoid unnecessary and expensive coursework to become a teacher, and instead learn to teach through proven programs such as teaching residencies that pair up new recruits with master teachers in rural classrooms. Obama introduced teacher residency legislation and got it passed by the U.S. Senate. It also means giving successful teachers more control over what goes on in their classrooms, and more

opportunities to advance through career ladders, where teachers may choose to take on additional instructional leadership roles.

- **Attract Teachers to Rural Schools:** Experts predict that we will need two million new teachers over the next decade to fill our nation's classrooms. Obama will provide incentives for talented individuals to enter the teaching profession, including increased pay for teachers who work in rural areas. Nevada is having trouble attracting teachers because the cost of housing is so high. Teachers in Nevada also make roughly \$4,000 less than the national average. Obama supports making the teaching profession well-respected, well-paid, and results-based with real opportunities for lifetime career growth and development.
- **Reduce Dropout Rates by Intervening Early:** Middle school is a critical time in a student's educational development. It is important to reach at-risk students early, before they drop out. Barack Obama introduced legislation to provide competitive grants to local school districts to improve low performing schools. The legislation would promote identification systems to identify students most at risk, and to determine how best to teach and support them.
- **Support Entrepreneurship Education:** Barack Obama will create a Rural Revitalization Program to attract and retain young people to rural America. The program will make grants available to four-year and community colleges, extension services, non-profit organizations and primary and secondary schools to give rural Americans the opportunity to get an education that teaches them how to start and run their own businesses.
- **Expand Research at Land Grant and 1890 Schools:** The research and education provided by the nation's land grant colleges, including the University of Nevada, Reno, have played a pivotal role in establishing America's competitive advantage in agriculture. Today, these schools need more funding to respond to new challenges. Barack Obama will increase research and educational funding for projects such as enhancing the profitability and competitiveness of small and mid-size farms and ranches, entrepreneurial education for adults and youth learners, and research on alternative energy production systems and how to produce conservation commodities efficiently.
- **Support Community and Local Four-Year Colleges in Fulfilling Their Mission in Rural America:** Studies show that community college graduates often remain in rural communities. Barack Obama will provide funding to community colleges and local four-year schools to reevaluate the types of skills and education that are in demand from students and local businesses in support of health careers, renewable energy initiatives, and other ventures to revitalize rural economies. This will lead local colleges to implement new degree programs that reflect the increasingly dynamic and technical skills required for rural America to respond to a globalizing workforce.

Protect the Financial Security & Health of Seniors: Rural communities are significantly older than their urban counterparts. Across America, 20 percent of rural Americans are older than 59 compared to 15 percent in cities. And Nevada's senior population is projected to grow faster than all but two other states between now and 2030. If usual patterns hold, this growth rate will be most pronounced in Nevada's rural counties.

- **Protect and Strengthen Social Security:** As the cornerstone of America's social compact, Social Security has lifted millions of seniors and their families out of poverty. Social Security is particularly critical to our rural communities. In fact, one study found that rural communities depend on income from Social Security nearly twice as much as non-rural communities. Barack Obama will protect Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries alike. Obama does not believe we need to raise the

retirement age, and he opposes privatization because it subjects a secure retirement to the whims of the market. Currently, the Social Security payroll tax applies to only the first \$97,500 a worker makes. Obama supports increasing the maximum amount so that wealthier taxpayers contribute a little more to preserve the integrity of the Social Security program. Obama will preserve Social Security by working in a bipartisan way to maintain its solvency for future generations.

- **Secure Pensions:** Barack Obama will insist that companies keep the promises they have made to their employees. He will amend bankruptcy laws to keep companies from filing for Chapter 11 in order to avoid obligations to their workers. In the Senate, Obama voted for new rules to force companies to properly fund their pension plans so taxpayers don't end up footing the bill. Obama has also voted to shore up funding of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the federal agency that guarantees retirees receive at least some of their pension monies if their companies go out of business.
- **Eliminate Income Taxes for Seniors Making Less Than \$50,000:** Since the New Deal, we've had a basic understanding in America: If you work hard and pay into the system, you've earned the right to a secure retirement. But too many seniors in both rural and urban areas aren't getting that security, even though they've held up their end of the bargain. Barack Obama will eliminate all income taxation of seniors making less than \$50,000 per year. As a result 22 million American seniors, including 200,000 Nevadans, will not need to file an income tax return, and income taxes for nearly seven million seniors nationwide will be eliminated at a savings of roughly \$1,400 each year. For many seniors, this will eliminate the need to hire a tax preparer, resulting in even larger savings.
- **Provide Cheaper Prescription Drugs:** Our seniors pay the highest prices in the world for brand-name drugs. Nevada seniors pay 75 percent more for their drugs than veterans who get their prescriptions at the VA, and 51 percent more than those who buy their drugs at Canadian pharmacies. To help lower the cost of pharmaceuticals, Barack Obama believes that the federal government should negotiate for lower drug prices for seniors in the Medicare program, just as it negotiates to obtain lower prices for our veterans. He also supports efforts to allow seniors to import prescription drugs from Canada. Obama applauds Nevada's program to certify Canadian pharmacies and make it easier for state residents to safely purchase cheaper drugs online.

Conserve Rural Nevada's Land, Water, and Air:

- **Address Water Challenges in the West:** Barack Obama understands that the American West and diverse communities across Nevada are facing serious water challenges and shortages. Obama will work with Nevadans as an honest broker to find a solution that protects the state's natural resources and continues to encourage growth in Las Vegas and Reno, while respecting the concerns of ranchers and rural communities that depend on this resource for their livelihoods. Obama also believes we must create a national plan to help communities reduce water use and increase conservation efforts. He will set forth policies to encourage communities to develop voluntary water banks, wastewater treatment, and other market-based measures. He will also work to improve technology for water conservation and efficiency, and will remove institutional barriers to increase cooperation and collaboration among federal, state, tribal, and private organizations. Obama believes that Nevada has demonstrated the right brand of leadership with programs like "Cash for Grass" – which provides incentives for Nevadans to convert from turf to natural landscaping – and Obama intends to help local communities develop similar projects that work for them.
- **Keep Tahoe Blue:** Having lived near the Great Lakes for 20 years, Barack Obama has a deep appreciation for our nation's lakes—for their beauty as well as the central role they play in their region's

economy and recreation. Obama has a record of working tirelessly to protect our lakes from sludge, mercury, and invasive species. Lake Tahoe is a national treasure. Barack Obama will work with the States of Nevada and California and the federal land management agencies to protect Lake Tahoe and keep it blue.

- **Fight and Prevent Wildfires:** Barack Obama understands the serious threats that wildfires pose to life and property in rural Nevada. For the most part, the professionalism and preparation of our firefighters has kept Nevada safe, but we have to do a better job of preventing fires. As Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) has emphasized, we need more native plants and fewer fire-prone invasive species to prevent wildfires. Barack Obama supports efforts to develop better seed stockpiles of these native plants. He also recognizes that we need to protect Nevada by fighting climate change, since scientists have found that warmer temperatures in the West, combined with earlier snowmelts, have increased the number and destructiveness of wildfires.
- **Partner with Landowners to Conserve Private Lands:** Farmers, ranchers, and private landowners are the principle stewards of rural land and water. As president, Barack Obama will put an unprecedented level of emphasis on the conservation of private lands. He will advance legislation that works with landowners and follows in the tradition of the Wilderness Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act to focus federal attention and increased resources for this key environmental issue.
- **Protect the Rights of Sportsmen:** Barack Obama deeply respects America's sportsmen and is committed to protecting their rights. Tens of millions of Americans hunt and fish. Obama believes that we can protect the rights of hunters and other lawful gun owners while still working to reduce gun violence and ensure that guns do not fall into the hands of criminals or the mentally ill.

Obama is fully committed to protecting the forests, fish, and game our sportsmen enjoy. Obama will provide full funding for a broad range of conservation programs. He also supports a proposal by more than 25 national hunting and fishing organizations to help fish and wildlife survive the impacts of climate change.

- **Reduce Air Pollution:** The adverse health effects of air pollution include premature death, lung disease, heart disease, and asthma. Because emissions from power plants and other sources can travel long distances, many rural communities experience air pollution. Barack Obama helped stop President Bush's attempt to undermine the Clean Air Act, which would have increased industrial emissions of mercury and sulfur. He also helped block attempts to roll back environmental regulations on oil refineries. As president, Obama will restore the strength of the Clean Air Act. He also will protect rural families from smog and soot, which harm lung function and may aggravate asthma.
- **Combat Water Pollution:** Barack Obama will work with rural industries and mines to promote the best water reclamation practices.

Upgrade Rural Infrastructure: Much of the public infrastructure in rural America has fallen into significant disrepair. This has hurt the long-term competitiveness of our rural communities. Nevada drivers spend an extra \$120 million per year in vehicle repairs and operating costs due to driving on roads in poor condition. Barack Obama believes that America's long-term competitiveness depends on the stability of our critical infrastructure. As president, he will invest in the core infrastructure that rural communities need to thrive.

- **Improve Transportation Options:** Rural America depends on reliable, cost-effective, and efficient

transportation - whether by barge, truck or rail - to deliver its products to market. Increasing rates for rail service, aging locks and dams, and congested roadways have made these problems worse. Barack Obama believes we need to invest more in our roads, bridges, and public transit to help support the growth of cities like Las Vegas while making sure that our rural areas don't fall behind. Obama supports using federal funds to repair deteriorating roads and bridges, and accommodate pedestrians and bikeways. Obama has worked across party lines to protect funding for the Essential Air Service program, which provides vital funds for air transportation in rural areas.

- **Improve Water and Sewer Systems:** Rural areas often depend on federal funding to maintain their water and sewer systems. Water systems in Churchill, Lincoln, Storey and Humboldt Counties recently received USDA grants to improve their water systems. Recently, however, budget cuts and reduced grant funds have combined to cut down on the number of new projects. As a result, these important infrastructure areas have been neglected and allowed to degrade. Barack Obama will ensure these programs are adequately funded.
- **Target Rural Development Aid to Truly Rural Areas:** Since 2001, the USDA has distributed more than \$70 billion in grants and loans through its Rural Development program. Unfortunately, less than half of those funds have gone to truly rural areas. Instead, the USDA has awarded the bulk of these benefits to metropolitan regions, recreational and retirement communities, and businesses that hardly qualify as contributing to the quality of life in rural America. In one particularly egregious example, USDA awarded \$4.5 million to the Black Dog Tavern on Martha's Vineyard to refinance a mortgage and to expand its clothing stores. One key cause of this distorted allocation of funds has been the Bush administration's decision to shift much of the funding from grants to loans, pricing out the lower-income, truly rural areas that most need the funding but can least afford to repay the loans. As president, Barack Obama will rationalize USDA funding rules to ensure that these funds are provided to truly rural areas, with preferences for areas that have a harder time attracting private investment.

Create Fund to Help Homeowners Avoid Foreclosures: Home foreclosures more than doubled in Nevada between 2005 and 2006—before the sub-prime crisis really hit. Nevada has the highest foreclosure rate in the country. Some 11,700 properties have already been foreclosed on in Nevada. While the vast majority of those homes are in Clark County, it is a problem that has impacted rural areas like Douglas and Lyon Counties as well. In addition to taking important steps to prevent mortgage fraud from occurring in the future, Barack Obama will establish policies to help Americans currently facing foreclosure through no fault of their own. For instance, in communities where there are many foreclosures, property values of innocent homeowners are often also negatively impacted, driving them toward foreclosure, too.

Obama will create a fund to help people refinance their mortgages and provide comprehensive support to innocent homeowners. The fund will also assist individuals who purchased homes that are simply too expensive for their income levels by helping them sell their homes. The fund will help offset costs of selling a home, including helping low-income borrowers get additional time and support to pay back any losses from the sale of their home and waiving certain federal, state and local income taxes that result from an individual selling their home to avoid foreclosure. These steps will ensure that individuals who have to sell their homes will be able to quickly regain stable financial footing. The fund will be partially paid for by Obama's increased penalties on lenders who acted irresponsibly and committed fraud.

III. PROMOTE RURAL AMERICA'S LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING RENEWABLE ENERGY

America's rural areas have been on the forefront of the renewable fuels movement. Barack Obama has been

one of the strongest proponents in Congress for increasing the national supply of renewable fuels. As president he will ensure that our rural areas continue their leadership in this arena. Obama will use some of the revenue generated from his cap-and-trade permit auction to invest in climate-friendly energy development and deployment. This will transform the economy, especially in rural America, which is poised to create more renewable energy and millions of new jobs across the country. Some estimate that over 3,300 new jobs could be created in rural Nevada through the renewable energy industry. Nevada has plentiful geothermal, solar, and wind energy that can be harnessed to meet the energy needs of Nevada's rapidly growing population while combating global climate change. Some have estimated that Nevada's solar energy potential alone could supply the entire country's electricity needs if it could be properly converted.

Develop and Deploy New Renewable Technologies:

- **Require 25 Percent of Electricity to Come from Renewable Sources by 2025:** In 2001, Nevada enacted the strongest renewable energy standard at the time, requiring that 15 percent of the electricity generated in the state be derived from renewable sources. As president, Barack Obama will build on Nevada's success and establish a national 25 percent federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to require that 25 percent of electricity consumed in the U.S. is derived from clean, sustainable energy sources, like solar, geothermal, wind, and biomass by 2025. This requirement will spur significant private sector investment in renewable sources of energy and create thousands of new American jobs, especially in rural areas. As an Illinois state senator, Obama cosponsored a measure to create an RPS in Illinois. And recently, Illinois signed into law a 25 percent RPS by 2025 measure modeled on Obama's State Senate RPS efforts. As a U.S. Senator, Obama successfully fought regulatory efforts to put Midwestern wind projects on hold.
- **Extend the Production Tax Credit:** Obama will also extend the federal Production Tax Credit for 5 years to encourage the production of renewable energy, including solar, geothermal, wind, and biomass. This program will provide incentives to farmers and other local producers of renewable energy to boost rural renewable energy production.
- **Create a Clean Technologies Deployment Venture Capital Fund:** Barack Obama will create a Clean Technologies Deployment Venture Capital Fund to fill a critical gap in U.S. technology development. This Fund will partner with existing investment funds and our National Laboratories to ensure that promising technologies move beyond the lab and are commercialized in the U.S. The risks and associated costs of commercializing a new energy technology often prevent critically important technologies from ever seeing the light of day. The gap between the lab and the marketplace is sometimes referred to as the "Valley of Death," because many technologies enter but few ever make it out the other side due to the prohibitive costs of building the first commercial-scale facility that processes that energy source. Currently, U.S. venture capital funding is doing an effective job promoting the research and development stage, but far too often, technologies invented here in the U.S. such as wind turbines, solar panels, and compact fluorescent bulbs are commercialized overseas and then sold back to American consumers.

Coupled with an Obama Administration's increased investment in renewable energy research and development, this Fund will quickly deploy new technologies like cellulosic ethanol, carbon capture and sequestration, and other clean technologies like bio-based plastics and commercial sized solar energy projects like the 64 megawatt Nevada Solar One. The Fund will help ensure that the American economy and environment benefit from clean technologies in the next few years, as opposed to the next several decades. Obama will invest \$10 billion in this fund for five years, and reinvest profits back into the fund.

- **Invest in a Digital Smart Grid and Improve Rural Transmission:** Like other pieces of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, our energy grid, particularly in rural areas, is outdated and inefficient, resulting in \$50 to \$100 billion losses to the U.S. economy each year. Just as President Dwight Eisenhower invested in the interstate highway system in the 1950s, Barack Obama will work with the states and private utilities to pursue a major federal investment in our national utility grid. A modernized digital smart grid will enable a tremendous increase in renewable energy generation and accommodate 21st century energy requirements, such as reliability, smart metering, and distributed storage. Today, our energy grid is virtually unprotected from terrorists. By creating a smart grid, the government will be able to more effectively address terrorism concerns. A smart grid will also allow individuals to produce electricity on their property through solar panels or wind turbines, which they will then be able to sell back to utilities through the grid. Obama will direct federal resources, including tax incentives and increased bond authority, to the most vulnerable areas, including rural communities, where significant renewable energy sources are located.

Yucca Mountain: Barack Obama opposes storing nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain. Even though our government has spent billions of dollars on Yucca Mountain, there are still significant questions about whether nuclear waste can be safely stored there. Obama believes the federal government should abandon the Yucca Mountain project and redirect spending to alternatives, such as creating regional storage repositories and improving the safety and security of spent fuel at plant sites around the country. At the same time, we should continue looking for a safe, long-term disposal solution based on objective, scientific analysis. Obama would work to find good jobs for Nye County residents who would be hurt by the closure of Yucca Mountain, including jobs in renewable energy and the promotion of research at the Nevada Test Site.

Invest in the Fastest, Cheapest Way to Energy Independence--Energy Efficiency: Improving energy efficiency is the fastest, cheapest, and most cost-effective method to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and it results in significant savings for our government, economy and consumers. Cost effective energy efficiency should take priority over the construction of new generation facilities. Barack Obama will set a bold national goal of reducing the energy intensity of our economy 50 percent by 2030.

Invest in Rural Lands and Reduce Carbon Emissions by Promoting Carbon Sequestration: Barack Obama believes any domestic program to reduce carbon emissions must include domestic incentives that reward ranchers, farmers, and landowners when they plant trees, restore grasslands, or undertake farming practices that capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Encouraging these efforts will also improve water quality and restore natural areas for wildlife and recreation.

IV. ENSURE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILY RANCHERS

One in every eight rural Nevada jobs is ranch- or farm-related. Nevada's ranchers face ever increasing economic and market pressures, which have forced many small ranchers to sell family land to developers or better-financed larger interests. Nevada used to contain 10 million acres of farm and ranch land, but by 2005 there were only 6.3 million acres left. Barack Obama understands that ranching is important to rural Nevada, and he will help family ranchers find profitability in the marketplace and success in the global economy. He believes that better federal land management with ranchers will lead to improved conservation of federal land resources and enhance long-term ranching prospects.

- **Establish Country of Origin Labeling:** Barack Obama supports immediate implementation of the Country of Origin Labeling law, which will require meat products to indicate their country of origin.

Obama believes that American producers should be able to distinguish their products from imported ones and that consumers have the right to know where their food comes from.

- **Prevent Anticompetitive Behavior Against Family Ranches:** In an era of market consolidation, Barack Obama will fight to ensure family and independent ranchers have fair access to markets, control over their production decisions, and transparency in prices. Obama is a strong supporter of legislation that protects independent producers by banning the ownership of livestock by meat packers, and he will fight for passage of the law as president. Just four firms slaughtered 71 percent of all U.S. cattle in 2005. The 1921 Packers and Stockyards Act prohibits price discrimination by meatpackers against small and mid-size ranchers, but the law has not been enforced. Obama will issue regulations for what constitutes undue price discrimination and his administration will enforce the law. He will also strengthen anti-monopoly laws; change federal agriculture policy to strengthen producer protection from fraud, abuse, and market manipulation; and make sure that federal programs are helping family ranchers, as opposed to large, vertically integrated corporate agribusiness.
- **Maintain our Export Competitiveness:** The United States is the world's largest exporter of agricultural products, exporting roughly 1.2 million tons of beef per year. Barack Obama will work to break down trade and investment barriers to maintain the American rancher's competitiveness around the world. As president, Obama will devote more resources to research and technology development so that American ranchers can maintain their technological edge in production and distribution of their goods. He will broaden export promotion programs to include export training and workshops. He will help producers develop global marketing networks through the use of new electronic transaction systems and special promotion programs. And Obama will work to ensure that all trade agreements contain strong and enforceable labor, environmental, and health and safety standards so American ranchers are able to compete on a level playing field.
- **Improve Food Safety:** The American beef industry lost billions of dollars when Japan closed its market to American beef imports due to mad cow concerns. The USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) need more authority to issue and enforce recalls for contaminated food. Barack Obama supports efforts to improve federal food safety surveillance so that we can more effectively identify, contain, and prevent outbreaks. He is committed to expanding resources to inform the public when an outbreak happens, so that they can make good decisions about food safety.