President Obama Calls for Greener Homes and Businesses

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"Let's cut in half the energy wasted by our homes and businesses."

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. Last night, President Obama issued a challenge to transform the way we construct, manage and operate our buildings.

"I'm also issuing a new goal for America: Let's cut in half the energy wasted by our homes and businesses over the next twenty years," said President Obama in his State of the Union address.

By transforming our buildings, we not only help protect our planet, but we help strengthen the American economy. A green building agenda is the most cost effective way to save energy, save people and our businesses money, and create jobs. We know already that the green building industry is driving more than half a trillion dollars in economic activity.

The President's call to action mirrors USGBC's mission of market transformation. We know we're losing $130 billion a year from inefficient, leaky buildings. That's a huge economic stimulus that we could be seizing every single year.

The President also said he would foster stronger ties to states that are helping lead on building efficiency. "We'll work with states to do it," said Obama. "Those states with the best ideas to create jobs and lower energy bills by constructing more efficient buildings will receive federal support to help make that happen."

And many states are advancing creative ideas. Texas has its innovative LoanSTAR program. California is ramping up PACE financing with CaliforniaFIRST. Connecticut has a Green Bank. These are just a few examples. Recently, USGBC, in its Top 10 States for LEED, recognized states with a green thumb that are growing green buildings.

It's not just talk: the federal agencies themselves have also been leading by example. The General Services Administration, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and many more have been leaders on green building with results to the tune of 25 percent less energy in LEED-certified spaces.

By working together, I know we can achieve this goal. And in doing so, we protect our environment and strengthen our economy.

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