

# Leadership Abounds: President Obama, President Clinton and Green Building Leaders Join Forces to Commit to Energy Efficiency

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Written by [Rick Fedrizzi](#)

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Last week from the White House Old Executive Building it was like a different planet -- outside the white walls, D.C. politics continued to swirl, but for one moment we found something we can all agree on. I sat there as President Obama and former President Clinton joined forces to make three huge announcements on energy efficiency in buildings. First, that the federal government will be investing big time in energy efficiency, to the tune of \$2 billion dollars that will ultimately be returned to taxpayers many times over through lower operating costs. Second, that the private sector will do the same, as companies respond to the President's Better Buildings Challenge with their own \$2 billion dollar investment covering 1.6 billion square feet of commercial building space. Last but not least, the IRS and Treasury will finally revise the guidance on the under-utilized 179D tax deduction for energy efficient commercial buildings.

What does this tell us? That jobs and energy savings are possible with little effort from companies. Sounds too good to be true, but that's \$4 billion dollars and around 50,000 jobs if you are counting, all without any tax increases, spending cuts, offsets or other partisan mud-slinging from Congress. President Clinton called this a "free lunch." He's right.

[Revising Section 179D](#) is, has been and will remain a focal point of our federal agenda and we've long advocated for the federal government to use the tools at its disposal, like performance contracting with energy service companies, to slash energy consumption in federal buildings. (The recommendations were front and center in our 2010 "[Using Executive Authorities](#)" report. We are thrilled to see that recommendation taken, and we look forward to adding these initiatives to the successful agency actions in the next version of the report, to be released soon.

No less exciting are the commitments made by USGBC member cities, universities, and companies. In all at least 27 member companies, four member universities, and six member cities and states accepted the challenge (see below for full list). Member company LendLease America's CEO Bob McNamara CEO, for example, told the group he is building green-based housing for 40,000 veterans, setting an example and showing strong leadership in sustainability.

Our member company leaders are truly at the forefront of green building and energy efficiency. In particular, I want to highlight Best Buy, CBRE, Citi, Intercontinental Hotels, Kohl's and PNC as participants in the [LEED Volume Program](#) that are building and improving tremendous numbers of buildings every day.

While \$2 billion dollars is nothing to sneeze at, remember it's only the tip of the iceberg. The efficiency opportunity is \$130 billion dollars a year and 1 million new jobs if we keep working. The green building industry will be the workhorse that pulls us along the path of economic recovery.

The green building industry is not going to let up in our push to realize this potential. That's why we have joined with the Real Estate Roundtable and the Natural Resources Defense Council to launch the "[Coalition for Better Buildings](#)" (C4BB), where all interested organizations can come to coordinate, share information and take action on commercial building energy efficiency. There is a groundswell of support from the private sector to move forward on energy efficiency policy, and we hope you will join us today.

## Accepting the Better Buildings Challenge:

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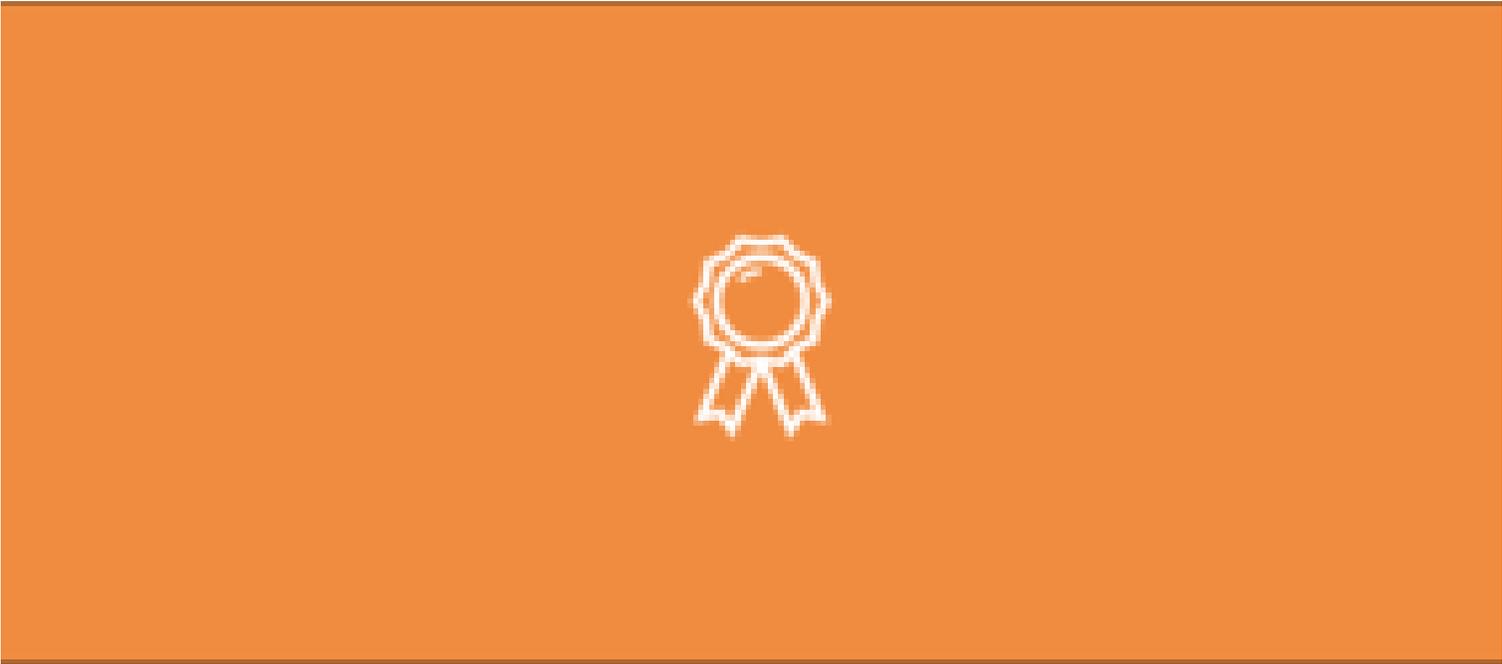
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