February 24, 2009

The Honorable Stephen Chu, Ph.D
Secretary
Department of Energy
Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

On behalf of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and our 4,500 members, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your confirmation to the Office of Secretary of the Department of Energy. I understand that you are quickly undertaking the very important ‘transition’ phase of your Department, and I simply wanted the opportunity to congratulate you, introduce our organization, and offer information about our energy-related issues before Congress and the Administration.

NECA is the voice of the nation’s electrical contracting industry - a critical component of the nation’s small business sector and vital in providing the generation, transmission and distribution of electrical power across this great country. We are also a significant component of the construction industry which, in turn, is one of the largest employers of American citizens, representing a major portion of our national gross domestic product. Nearly one million construction jobs, including many in the electrical contracting industry, have been lost during this economic downturn.

NECA is encouraged by the Administration’s aggressive response strategies and proposals to rebuild our national infrastructure with the possibility of creating an estimated 3 to 4 million jobs. Such policies to “green” the federal government through investment in energy efficient technologies and alternative energies as well as enhancements in the electrical grid would provide significant benefit for our contractors and are wholeheartedly endorsed by our organization. Electrical contractors are the key conduit in our distribution system for installation of all energy efficient electrical products and alternative energy sources. Together, we can help rebuild, renew, and re-energize America.

NECA is dedicated to enhancing the industry through continuing education and training in emerging energy technologies including: smart meter installation and smart grid construction; increasing energy efficiency through retrofitting; high-performance building design and construction; and development of best-industry practices to make the generation, distribution, and consumption of energy more efficient and reliable. In conjunction with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), NECA has helped build the National Joint
Apprenticeship Training Committee (NJATC), a nationally recognized training program jointly funded at a $100 million per year. To date, the NJATC has been successful in training 300,000 apprentices to meet the demands of today and the energy technologies of tomorrow.

NECA recognizes that our nation is uniquely positioned and capable of developing and employing the world’s most advanced clean energy technologies; however, our collective inability to achieve such a goal has been the result of our failure in implementing a comprehensive energy policy that is vigorous in its demands, yet feasible in its execution. Between the external pressures that have triggered surges in global energy demands, and internal platitudes that have inhibited investment in maintaining the modern electrical infrastructure by failing to build a smarter, more energy efficient grid capable of integrating clean energy technologies, our nation’s economic and energy security has been compromised.

NECA supports a multi-faceted approach to making the United States energy independent, including policies aimed at improving electric reliability, promoting infrastructure investment, enhancing energy efficiency, and increasing use of renewable energy sources, such as photovoltaic, wind, geothermal, hydro-kinetic and nuclear power. NECA also believes that traditional energy industries, including coal, natural gas, and oil, must further develop and embrace emerging industry innovations, like carbon sequestration and bio-fuel production, to ensure that the ability of our economy to grow is preserved during the transition period toward a new energy economy.

Electricity is the fuel of the future - it lights our homes and our businesses, and will be capable of fueling our cars and heating our water without leaving behind a carbon footprint of today’s energy sources. This move toward energy independence needs to be driven by industries that are leading the way in transforming the sources of energy generation and in improving the infrastructure upon which our national prosperity relies. It is a shared responsibility, but one that will create jobs, increase resource conservation, and embrace standards of environmental and economic sustainability.

The electrical industry advances economic growth and productivity, promotes business development and expansion, and provides solid employment opportunities to American workers -- both directly and indirectly. NECA recognizes that a course that fails to embrace a major reorientation in how we produce, distribute, and use energy will result in further economic distress, higher energy costs, and more costly implications to our national security.

NECA further supports the federal efforts underway to encourage the weatherizing of homes, temperature control systems in places of business, investment tax credits for energy efficiency and clean energy systems. The credit crisis has unfortunately impeded many projects underway and has prevented the market-entry of many other investors. DOE should ensure that a renewable energy bond fund be established to provide investors with needed capital to complete new energy construction projects.

Guided by a shared recognition that the U.S. economy and its security are highly dependent on affordable and reliable electricity, I welcome the chance to meet with you and your staff at the
Department and would be honored to assist you in advancing mutual policy goals and objectives. In advance, NECA appreciates the opportunity to present these views and hopes you will call on us as a resource when you consider these issues.

NECA is the nationally-recognized voice of the $130 billion electrical construction industry that brings power, light, and communication technology to buildings and communities across the U.S. NECA's national office and its 119 local chapters are dedicated to enhancing the industry through continuing education, labor relations, safety codes, standards development, and government relations.

Sincerely,

John M. Grau
Chief Executive Officer