

Biden calls for new clean energy policy for US

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Vice President Joe Biden, accompanied by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nev. waves after giving a key note speech at the National Clean Energy Summit, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011, in Las Vegas. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

(AP) -- The United States can't lead the world in the 21st century with its current energy policy, Vice President Joe Biden told alternative technology supporters Tuesday at a clean energy summit in Las Vegas.

Biden said the nation is already trailing China and Germany in green technology. It will trade its dependence on foreign oil for a dependence on foreign [clean energy technology](#) if its leaders don't act to help fledging green researchers and businesses, he said.

"If we shrink from deciding whether we are going to lead in the area of alternative energy, renewable energy, then we will be making the biggest

mistake that this nation has made in its history," Biden said during his keynote speech at the fourth-annual National [Clean Energy](#) Summit.

Biden said the future will demand cities that produce all the energy they consume; battery-powered cars able to travel great distances and bacteria that converts sunlight directly into fuel, among other innovations.

"Innovation and energy will go on whether or not we join and no nation which experts to be a leader of other nations can fall behind," he said.

Biden announced during his speech that five technology companies receiving up to \$6 million each from the Department of Energy have since attracted more than \$100 million in private investments. The firms in North Carolina, California and Colorado are developing advanced grid scale batteries or new approaches to biofuels or waste heat recovery. Biden said the private investments demonstrate that the green industry needs both public and private contributions to succeed.

"No previous generation has had that debate about whether or not we are going to lead the world because in the past it simply hasn't been a question," he said. "This isn't science fiction. This is within our grasp."

National politicians and [green technology](#) leaders are attending the Las Vegas energy conference to discuss [energy security](#) and independence. U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval and California Gov. Jerry Brown are among the notable speakers.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has hosted the conference since 2008. He announced Tuesday that construction on the world's first hybrid geothermal and solar power plant is starting in northern Nevada. Enel Green Power North America's geothermal plant in Churchill County is adding a solar project.

Chu said oil prices will increase while green energy will become cheaper in the future. He also said science education is a top priority.

"It's part of American heritage to make national investments during time of distress," he said.

California leads the states in solar energy production. Brown said the stalemate between Republicans and Democrats in Congress is hurting the economy. California and Nevada have the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

"What is needed is stimulus," Brown told The Associated Press.

"Stimulus is money. If the consumer doesn't provide it then the federal government has to provide it."

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