Cantwell Announces $88 Million for Landmark Pacific Northwest Smart Grid Project

Local News

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SEATTLE, WA – Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) announced that Battelle Memorial Institute will receive a federal investment of $88,821,251 to develop smart grid technologies that will create jobs and lead to lower electricity bills for consumers. The funding for the Pacific Northwest Smart Grid Demonstration Project will be used to install a smart grid framework, including a digital telecommunications network, substation automation and a robust distribution system infrastructure. This will enable the implementation of future smart grid technologies, including smart meters that will provide real-time energy use information to customers and help lower rates. Smart grid technology includes hardware and software, which when linked together can communicate to optimize how electricity is generated, transmitted, distributed, and used.

Cantwell has led efforts to invest in technologies that will upgrade the nation’s electricity grid. She pushed to include $4.5 billion in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* for smart grid investments, funding which is authorized by legislation authored by Senator Cantwell in the 2007 Energy Bill. Cantwell also called on regional stakeholders to jointly develop a regional smart grid demonstration project at her Smart Grid Conference held in Spokane in February 2009. Battelle Memorial Institute will match this funding to help create jobs and provide Washington state consumers with a stronger, more reliable grid that will reduce their overall energy costs.

“The nation’s electricity grid is starting to show its age and is straining to meet an ever-increasing demand, but by infusing intelligence into the grid we can make it more reliable, efficient, and save consumers money,” said Cantwell. **“This funding validates our region's leadership in this promising growth area of clean energy and Washington state will be at the forefront of empowering homeowners and businesses to reduce electricity costs and create high-paying, long-term jobs.”**

“The Pacific Northwest Smart Grid Demonstration Project is going to create good jobs in the region and will help us understand what pieces we need to put in place to help our state’s families and businesses reduce their energy usage and costs,” said Senator Patty Murray. **“These funds will help Washington state remain at the forefront of the clean-energy economy and will help keep our power grid reliable, modern, and secure.”**

The Smart Grid title of the 2007 Energy Bill established a smart grid development program at the Department of Energy; required the development of an interoperability framework; established a federal matching grant program; created a Smart Grid Advisory Committee to advise the federal government on the deployment of smart grid technologies; initiated a Smart Grid Task Force to coordinate the federal government’s smart grid policies; and encouraged state utility regulatory commissions to allow for rate recovery for smart grid investments.

Without Cantwell’s smart grid title, funding for the grants announced today would not have been possible.