

## The High Voltage Grid: Does The Obama Administration Get It?

On June 13, the White House, assisted by the secretaries of Energy, Interior, and Agriculture, unveiled a series of initiatives at a "[Grid Modernization Event](#)." Several WIRES representatives attended and [the event was widely reported](#).

Will these initiatives, and the superlative rhetoric, make a difference in strengthening the grid? WIRES, which has recently [expressed concern](#) that basic infrastructure was being ignored, is cautiously optimistic for several reasons.

First, Energy Secretary Chu acknowledged that the grid is more than smart meters and that regional planning and investment in high voltage facilities will be important for economic and reliability reasons. Nancy Sutley, chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, announced that grid modernization "goes beyond" smart grid technology, until now the focal point of Administration policy.

Second, implying that the previous 9-agency Memorandum of Understanding designed to coordinate federal environmental and land use approvals for transmission expansion was underperforming, Ms. Sutley announced a "Rapid Response Team" to assist transmission projects that would interconnect renewable resources achieve timely reviews. Details to follow, apparently.

Finally, the Secretary of Energy has a new advisor on grid matters – the very competent former Wisconsin PSC Commissioner Lauren Azar. We hope her job will be to set clear federal goals and find expeditious means to achieve them. Let's hope the next time the President talks about infrastructure investment, it's more than highways and bridges. **Stay tuned.**