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University of Tennessee Team Awarded DOE Solar Grant

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a \$622,960 grant to a team led by researchers from the University of Tennessee (UT), Tennessee Solar Institute, and the Howard H. Baker Center for Public Policy. The grant promotes partnerships with utilities and building officials across the state, to implement uniform standards for solar photovoltaic (PV) installations. This grant is one of 22 awards announced by DOE as part of its Rooftop Solar Challenge.

The goal of UT's project is to increase solar PV installations in Tennessee by reducing non-hardware costs associated with customer acquisition, permitting, inspection, installation, and interconnection. These costs currently comprise approximately 30 to 40 percent of the total installation cost of a rooftop PV system. Streamlining and developing uniform codes will significantly reduce the cost of installed PV.

With funds from this award, the UT team will work with multiple local governments and electrical distributors to address these issues. In partnership with UT, others who have committed resources for this project include the Tennessee Valley Authority, the City of Knoxville, the City of Franklin, Metro Nashville, Memphis/Shelby County, the Knoxville Utility Board, Nashville Electric Service, Memphis Light Gas and Water, and the Middle Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation.

"We are pleased to be working with various municipalities and distributors across the state who are making solar energy an affordable reality," said David Millhorn, executive vice-president of the University of Tennessee. "The success of this project will further expand job growth and economic development within the state's solar industry."

Carl Pierce, director of UT Knoxville's Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy added, "The Baker Center is excited to work on the development of uniform practices that will enhance solar installations in Tennessee. Participation in this project provides a great opportunity to promote public policy relating to Tennessee's needs for energy and a healthy environment."

The principal investigator for this project will be Bruce Tonn, Ph.D., director of the Energy and Environment Program (EEP) at the Howard H. Baker Center for Public Policy. John Sanseverino, Ph.D., and Jean Peretz, MPA, both with the Tennessee Solar Institute, will serve as co-investigators.

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The Tennessee Solar Institute is part of the Volunteer State Solar Initiative, a comprehensive solar energy and economic development program that was established using \$62.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funding received by the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.

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About Tennessee Solar Institute

The Tennessee Solar Institute (TSI) is a center of excellence between the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Laboratory that brings together scientists, engineers and technical experts with business leaders and policymakers to help speed the deployment of solar technology. Its mission is to advance the understanding of solar innovation and to inspire new ideas that speed the development and implementation of solar-based technology in Tennessee. TSI is housed at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For more information, visit <http://solar.tennessee.edu>.

About the Baker Center

The Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy is dedicated to the study of public governance, the development of sound public policy, and the promotion of a greater appreciation for the importance of citizen involvement in politics and the public policy process. The Center informs and engages its audiences through education, research and public programs.