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In My Opinion

Energy meeting reinforces need to work together

Mark B. Glick

It is a testimony to Hawaii's emergence as an international clean-energy test bed and deployment leader that the Hawaii State Energy Office was invited to participate in the third-annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) America in Chicago last week.

Held over two days, the meeting featured 1,000 participants that were split into 12 working groups with many of the nation's movers and shakers. Among the individual topic areas were high-growth entrepreneurship, renewable and distribution energy, small-business development, early childhood education and community investing. I was honored to be one of the three facilitators of the Renewable and Distributed Energy Working Group, giving Hawaii a unique opportunity to highlight proven policies and strategies we have pursued in the past several years.

A partial list of those included in my working group during the two days gives one a sense of the intensity of the discussions.

Joining me were Richard Kauffman, chairman of energy and finance for New York; Richard Sullivan, secretary of energy and environmental affairs in Massachusetts; Jessica Bailey, director of the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority of Vermont; Steven Cornell, senior vice president of NRG Energy; Skip Grow, managing director of Morgan Stanley; Paul Frankel, managing director of CalCEF Innovations; and Anthony Clifford, CEO of Standard Solar.

Other working groups included John Norris, commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC); Ted Roosevelt IV, managing director of Barclays Capital; Amory Lovins, founder and senior scientist of the Rocky Mountain Institute; and Hawaii's Jeff Mikulina, CEO of the Blue Planet Foundation.

When I was told by one of the organizers that CGI America is all about "moving the needle" through the commitments generated within these working groups, I knew we were with kindred spirits. A cornerstone of the Abercrombie administration has been to target high-impact solutions that "move the needle" on meeting the state's clean-energy goals under the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative.

It was also good to see validation of Hawaii's vision to pursue infrastructure improvements. Chicago Mayor and former Clinton and Obama staffer Rahm Emanuel's plan to boost competitiveness is rooted in infrastructure improvements to Chicago's airport and transportation systems, a competitive advantage, and in creating a world-class Internet and broadband system. To do this, Chicago created the nation's first urban infrastructure bank and is focusing on such infrastructure projects as building a new Chicago riverwalk to enhance its leadership as the fastest-growing downtown area in the country.

In the work group sessions, many were thunderstruck by Hawaii's commitment to more than double our previous energy-efficiency improvements to state and county buildings and facilities by partnering with the

private sector to implement energy-savings performance contracting. Hawaii already is the national leader in this area, and the commitment with partners City and County of Honolulu, state Department of Transportation, University of Hawaii Hilo, Board of Water Supply and the County of Kauai will add \$300 million to the present \$196 million for performance contracts with annual savings of 107 million kilowatt hours while adding 7 megawatts of renewable energy.

It was also enlightening to discuss the similarity and differences in approaches by Vermont, New York and Hawaii in developing new financing models for renewable-energy and energy-efficiency installations. Hawaii and New York are pursuing similar securitization models for issuing bonds that can be used for clean-energy loans, but unlike Hawaii's focus for cheap credit and on-bill repayment, New York is more interested in offering gap financing. Vermont continues to pursue a property-assessed clean-energy (PACE) model, but has limited this to multifamily, commercial and industrial customers.

New England has a familiar-sounding commitment to the pre-development phase of a proposed high-voltage, direct-current transmission system, called the Green Line Project. The \$2 billion project has grown from a capacity of 800 to 1,000 megawatts of transmission to facilitate the use of hydroelectric energy from Canada and wind-energy resources in northern Maine.

Hillary Clinton hailed public and private partnerships as one of the best ways to catalyze the investments in needed infrastructure, and cited three basic lessons she learned as she traveled to 112 nations as secretary of state.

First, the most fundamental thing people everywhere desire is a good job.

Second, America's greatest advantage is based on the values of freedom, equality and opportunity. Our pursuit of work needs to reflect the notion that if you work hard and play by the rules, you will prosper.

Finally, what the CGI America meeting is all about is that we must all work together. My main takeaway echoes Hillary's sentiment that by jointly building on what we know works, we can take on any challenge that faces us.

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