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Vermont's National Life Provides Business Leadership in Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Madam President, I would like to recognize the National Life Group of Vermont for the impact this company is having in the field of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental stewardship in my State of Vermont. National Life, a Fortune 1000 financial services and insurance firm based in Montpelier, is actively moving forward with a significant solar project at its headquarters.

National Life announced in May that it will install 240 300-watt solar panels on the roof of its Montpelier headquarters. This will be one of the largest, if not the largest, solar electric installations in Vermont. The solar panels are expected to be installed and running by September, and they estimate that the system will generate 77,767 kilowatt-hours a year. The 72 kW photovoltaic (PV) system will generate enough electricity to power 13 average Vermont homes.

The \$500,000 project will be financed in part through a \$200,000 grant from the State of Vermont's Clean Energy Development Fund, which is administered by the Department of Public Service.

National Life has contracted Solar Works of Montpelier, to handle the installation. Solar Works is the leading solar electric systems provider in the Northeast.

National Life is also working on a separate proposal to install a solar hot water system at the building. Both solar projects are part of a larger plan, begun five years ago, to transform the company's Montpelier headquarters into a 'green' campus. An important plan objective will be realized at the end of 2008, when the company expects to win a coveted LEED certification. LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design -- is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. Impressively, experts say LEED certification for National Life's headquarters would be the first for a 50-year-old facility anywhere in the nation.

Tom MacLeay, the CEO of National Life, has driven this entire green initiative. A Vermont native who has worked at National Life for 32 years, Tom recently announced that he would be retiring at the end of this year. It is certainly worth noting that the company's commitment to environmental leadership is a testimony to his vision of the ways in which business can

help achieve a secure environmental future for this nation.

Solar is not the only area in which National Life has shown its environmental stewardship. Every 10 days National Life sends its shredded paper to Fairmont Farms, a dairy farm in East Montpelier, to be used as bedding for the cows and mixed into fertilizer for the fields. In 2007 they recycled 64 percent of their waste, including paper, plastic, shredded material, aluminum, metal, food composting, and computer equipment.

In 2007 National Life transformed the offices of its Human Resources Department into a showcase for leading-edge green technology, using carpet with no volatile organic compounds (VOC), occupancy sensors, glass walls and automatic window blinds that allow light to pass through while keeping the heat out in the summer and the cold out in the winter. The new lighting technology put in place at its headquarters -- with fixtures that are 95 percent efficient compared to the 50 percent efficiency of existing fixtures -- will cut the company's electric bill in half.

The company's Alternate Transportation Program offers incentives such as free bike tune-ups, gas cards, free bus passes and shoe discounts for those who car pool, bike, use bus service, or walk or run to and from work.

Madam President, these accomplishments are not just environmentally sound, they illustrate smart business decisions. By reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, Vermont Life is cutting its electric bills and saving serious money, too. And by pushing the boundaries of what can be done, it is setting an example for other companies.

What they are accomplishing with solar energy in Vermont, which is not a particularly sunny state, demonstrates what is possible to achieve right now if the will is there to carry it through.

Madam President, I look forward to the day when renewable energy and conservation have become so commonplace in our society that they are no longer looked upon as being unusual or path-breaking, but are seen as totally ordinary, a normal part of the landscape. When that day comes, and I believe that it will, we will be able to look back to a handful of environmentally aware companies, such as National Life, that helped show us the way toward our sustainable energy society.