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## **New Coalition Launched in Arkansas to Address Energy, Economic Development, and Environmental Challenges**

Little Rock, AR/October 28, 2008 – A coalition of economic development, energy and environmental leaders in Arkansas today announced the formation of Progress Arkansas. The group's mission is to build consensus and broad support for economic, energy, and environmental policies that will promote growth and a better quality of life in the state.

Progress Arkansas' membership comes from a variety of sectors. Founding members include: the Arkansas Economic Developers, the Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Corp., the Arkansas Environmental Federation, the Arkansas Municipal Powers Association, the Arkansas Oklahoma Gas Corporation, the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Arkansas, Inc., the Arkansas State University Delta Center for Economic Development, Arkansas Western Gas – A SourceGas Company, CenterPoint Energy, Delta Plastics, the Empire District Electric Company, Entergy Arkansas, Inc., the Great River Economic Development Foundation, Inc., the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce, Metro Little Rock Alliance, Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company, Southwestern Electric Power Company, and the Wind Coalition.

In the coming weeks, Progress Arkansas members will be defining the group's agenda and initiating the development of educational resources, forums and other activities. In conjunction with the launch, Progress Arkansas also today released its first issue brief, "Powering Arkansas: A Profile of the State's Growing Electricity Demand," which provides an overview of the state's electricity supply challenges and ways in which growing demand can best be met. As part of its ongoing mission, the group will periodically release issue briefs, fact sheets and other educational resources on a variety of topics linked to energy, economic development and environmental issues. These resources can be found on Progress Arkansas' website: [www.progressarkansas.com](http://www.progressarkansas.com).

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Progress Arkansas was initiated by Bob Lamb, who serves as chairman. Since 1955, Mr. Lamb has been a state business and civic leader and a champion for economic development policies that have helped create jobs in Arkansas. Mr. Lamb also served as the executive vice president of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Industries of Arkansas, and as an officer, director and vice president of community development for the Arkansas Western Gas Company. Mr. Lamb's hard work and dedication to the vitality and growth of Arkansas continues through his leadership of Progress Arkansas to ensure that Arkansas has a bright future.

"Economic development professionals throughout the state are grateful for the many gains that have made since Governor Beebe, Maria Haley, and the administration took office in 2007," said Mr. Lamb. "However, there are still many challenges in front of us if we are going to build on those successes and see Arkansas reach its full economic potential. Progress Arkansas looks forward to working with the administration and other leaders throughout the state to be part of the solution to those challenges, meeting at the crossroads of economic development, energy, and environmental policy development, which are all intrinsically related to our state's future prosperity," said Mr. Lamb.

Economic development can continue to thrive in concert with pragmatic and responsible energy and environmental policies. Commenting as a founding member about his organization's support for the formation and goals of Progress Arkansas, Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce President Jay Chesshir said, "Progress Arkansas not only views the state's environment as something that should be protected, but also believes environmental issues present potential for further economic growth. Arkansas has already attracted a number of 'green collar' jobs, including windmill blade production, biomass research and others. However, with proper planning and partnerships, the state has the potential to become a leader in green collar industries."

Progress Arkansas board member Michael Lamoureux said, "If Arkansas is to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must recognize that economic, energy and environmental issues are inextricably linked. We must focus on the common goals shared by all three sectors and begin working toward achieving them. By doing so, Arkansas will reach its full economic potential and continue to be a beautiful place to live."

*About Progress Arkansas: Progress Arkansas' mission is to build consensus and support for economic, energy, and environmental policies that will support growth and prosperity for the State of Arkansas. Our membership is comprised of business and community-based leaders dedicated to promoting key solutions that will benefit Arkansas. For additional information visit [www.progressarkansas.com](http://www.progressarkansas.com).*