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Governor O'Malley Celebrates Groundbreaking on State's Largest Solar Power Project

HAGERSTOWN, MD (July 7, 2012) - Joined by local elected officials and representatives from First Solar and FirstEnergy, Governor Martin O'Malley today broke ground on a new, 160 acre solar farm project located on the grounds of the Maryland Correctional Institution (MCI) in Hagerstown. Once built, the Maryland Solar project will produce 20 megawatts of power - enough clean energy to power approximately 2,700 Maryland homes, displacing approximately 23,000 metric tons of CO₂ annually - the equivalent of taking 4,400 cars off the road each year. The project will create 125 construction jobs and at least three full time jobs will be created for the lifetime of the panels on the site.

The Maryland Department of General Services conducted a competitive leasing process for the land and the solar project was awarded the lease for a term of 20 years. The project represents FirstEnergy's fulfillment of its renewable energy commitment pursuant to the negotiated settlement between FirstEnergy and the State as a condition of its merger with Allegheny Power. FirstEnergy Solutions has agreed to purchase the 20MW output for 20 years. Over the term of the lease, First Solar will pay nearly \$460,000 in rent to lease the land from the State.

"Job creation is a choice - and when we choose to generate cleaner, greener energy here in Maryland we create Maryland jobs," said Governor O'Malley. "Innovative partnerships with companies like First Solar and FirstEnergy allow us to continue our progress in advancing solar energy and creating jobs in Maryland. Over the last few years, we've helped put 2,000 men and women to work in solar sector jobs and we estimate that over the next six years, we'll put another 10,000 Marylanders to work in the industry as we work towards our goal of increasing in-state renewable generation by 20%."

Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) - enacted in May 2004 - was amended in 2007 to include a solar requirement of 2% by 2022 and resulted in the development of more than 1,250 MW of solar capacity. In 2008, the O'Malley-Brown Administration signed legislation that more than doubled the overall RPS to 20% and accelerated the compliance schedule. This year, legislation passed that accelerated the 2% solar target from 2022 to 2020. Maryland has seen great market growth in solar power since 2007, resulting in the State being named as a "top 10" solar state by the Solar Energy Industries Association. Maryland now supports over 2,000 well-paying solar installation industry jobs-a dramatic increase in only a few years.

First Solar, the world's premier provider of fully integrated solar solutions, has a 100 percent stake in the Maryland Solar project. "First Solar is pleased to continue its work in Maryland to help the state provide clean, affordable, renewable energy to its citizens," said Maja Wessels, First Solar Executive Vice President for Global Public Affairs. "We are excited to break ground on Maryland Solar, which is expected to create 125 construction jobs and bring significant economic benefits to Washington County."

FirstEnergy Corp. subsidiary FirstEnergy Solutions will purchase the facility's 20-megawatt output for 20 years under a long-term purchase power agreement. The agreement provides the Maryland Solar project the source of guaranteed revenue necessary to obtain financing for its construction. "We are proud to play a key role in the development of renewable energy in Maryland and to help the state meet its renewable energy goals," said FirstEnergy President and Chief Executive Officer Anthony J. Alexander. "The Maryland Solar project delivers on our solar commitment to the state, and further strengthens our position as one of the region's leading renewable energy suppliers."

The Maryland Solar project also involves a unique public-private partnership with Hagerstown Community College (HCC) and the State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Systems (DPSCS). First Solar has agreed to incorporate elements of the construction and ongoing operation of the solar farm into HCC's growing alternative energy program, allowing students to learn firsthand about what it takes to construct and manage a commercial solar farm. Additionally, First Solar has agreed to allow pre-release inmates at MCI to be participate in the solar farms routine grounds keeping maintenance.

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