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EDITORIAL

Mr. Obama's Green Team

The League of Conservation Voters, starved for good news after eight years of the Bush administration's environmental policies, has hailed President-elect Barack Obama's choices for his top energy and environmental jobs as "a Green Dream Team." Let's hope it is.

There is no question what this team must do — mount a strong offensive on climate change, fashion a more efficient energy system, seek out and invest in next-generation, transformative technologies. These are extraordinarily difficult tasks that will face resistance from industry and many in Congress.

Mr. Obama's advisers fortunately seem united in their concern for the threats facing the planet and unafraid to use the pricing power of the market or the financial power of government to address them.

This effort will also need the full and very public support of the president. So we are heartened by Mr. Obama's decision to name a senior White House adviser to coordinate energy and environmental policy. His choice, Carol Browner, ran President Bill Clinton's Environmental Protection Agency and did not shy from bureaucratic combat. She toughened air quality standards despite opposition from Mr. Clinton's economic advisers.

Mr. Obama's most intriguing selection may be his choice to run the Energy Department. Steven Chu is a physicist who shared a Nobel Prize in 1997 and the director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He has a sophisticated grasp of the complexities of global warming and a strong belief in fighting it aggressively.

Mr. Chu also has refreshingly unconventional ideas of what it would take to solve the problem. Like others, he would put a price on carbon, preferably through a cap-and-trade program, and supports the various efficiency measures — cleaner cars, greener buildings and a modernized electrical grid — that Mr. Obama is likely to include as part of his economic stimulus package.

What sets him apart is his fierce conviction that innovation is just as important as regulation, and that big energy problems, like climate change and the world's dependency on fossil fuels, will not be solved without major private and public investment in the development and deployment of nonpolluting technologies.

Mr. Obama appears to have chosen well for other essential posts, naming Lisa Jackson, until recently New Jersey's top environmental officer, to run the Environmental Protection Agency, and Nancy Sutley, who holds the top environmental post in Los Angeles, to head the White House Council on Environmental Policy.

These are not the passive factotums who have occupied these jobs for most of the Bush years. Both believe in using and strengthening the government's statutory authority to control greenhouse gases and the ground-

level pollutants that cause smog and acid rain.

Admirable appointments would mean little unless Mr. Obama forces these issues to the top of his agenda. Ms. Browner can work from dawn to dusk gathering good ideas, selling them to the cabinet and sending them to Capitol Hill in persuasive legislative packages. But as we've learned in the last eight years, nothing happens unless the president wants it to.

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