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Rebecca O. Bagley, Contributor

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The US is in a race to become a global leader in advanced energy by developing solutions that are efficient, cost effective and reduce dependence on foreign oil. The industry has the potential to deliver so much promise to the world, yet it is still in its infancy. So what is being done to catalyze the advanced industry on a national level? How will we move the industry forward and be globally competitive if it is not able to speak or advocate with a collective voice?

Today a new national business group was [announced](#) to help answer these questions. The [Advanced Energy Economy \(AEE\)](#), a growing national network of state and regional business groups, will be charged with promoting American companies as global suppliers of innovative energy technologies. The group will develop a meaningful business federation to create a more supportive business and policy climate for the advanced energy industry in the US.

The AEE network is launching with state and regional chapters representing more than 700 companies in nine states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island and Vermont. The number of AEE chapters is expected to double by early next year.

Advanced Energy Economy Ohio (AEE Ohio) was one of the first regional energy organizations to join the national coalition. AEE Ohio consists of eight statewide partners - [EWI](#), [Ohio Business Council for a Clean Economy](#), [NorTech](#), [Dayton Development Coalition](#), [TechColumbus](#), [CincyTech](#), [TechGROWTH](#), and [Rocket Ventures](#) – working to build a strong business network that will foster a robust advanced energy economy and position Ohio as a global leader in the industry.

Businesses are stepping forward to part of the AEE network to accelerate the

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growth of the advanced energy industry.

“The formation of AEE Ohio and the growth of a national coalition both come at a critical juncture for our state and national economies,” commented Craig Shular, Chairman and CEO, [GrafTech International](#). “It’s hard to overstate the transformative potential of the advanced energy industry, and Ohio has an important role to play in making sure we realize this potential.”

“It’s time to look at energy innovation as a necessity for America, not an option,” said Tom Steyer, one of the founders of AEE and founder and co-managing partner of [Farallon Capital Management](#). “As global energy demand continues to grow, America has the opportunity to lead the world toward new ways to generate, use, and conserve this vital resource. If we do, it will advance our economy, improve our health and increase our national security. Not to do so would be a tragedy.”

I agree with Mr. Shular and Mr. Steyer. It’s time to take the nation’s advanced energy industry to the next level so we can reap the positive social and economic benefits. I am confident the AEE coalition of business leaders and entrepreneurial thinkers will spur collaboration necessary to accelerate the growth of the U.S. advanced energy industry and establish its global leadership.

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I began my career as an investment banker in a boutique firm and then moved on to Wall Street, raising capital for companies and working on mergers and acquisitions. I quickly learned that you can function at a high level even without much

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The author is a Forbes contributor. The opinions expressed are those of the writer.

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