

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Environment

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
Subcommittee on Energy

“Examining Advancements in Biofuels: Balancing Federal Research and Market Innovation”
July 25, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to our witnesses.

Our country’s dependence on crude oil to fulfill our transportation needs is problematic in at least a few ways. It’s made us subject to the boom and bust cycles of the volatile oil market. And it’s the reason why, according to the EPA, the transportation sector accounts for about 27 percent of our country’s greenhouse gas emissions. Those are excellent reasons why it’s crucial for us to develop and use fuels that will reduce our carbon footprint while still reliably meeting our transportation needs.

The renewable fuel standard was passed in 2005 to diversify our energy portfolio and reduce our reliance on the unstable international fossil fuel market. Policies such as the RFS have multiple goals in addition to reducing our overreliance on crude oil. They include providing more sustainable sources of energy, reducing carbon emissions, encouraging rural economic growth, and bringing new job opportunities to our districts.

We will likely hear from some witnesses today that policies like the RFS have failed. The evidence, however, points to the contrary.

Federal policies such as the RFS have grown our economy. By providing market certainty for biofuels, it has allowed the private sector to continue to innovate and expand the renewable fuel industry, with the Renewable Fuels Association finding that ethanol supported more than 74,000 direct jobs in renewable fuel production and agriculture in 2016.

The production and use of ethanol also has net positive environmental effects throughout its lifecycle. The Department of Energy’s Argonne National Laboratory has found through life cycle analysis that corn ethanol can produce approximately 48 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than conventional gasoline. This is bolstered by sustainable farming practices in the U.S. that led the same Argonne team to find that the production of a gallon of corn ethanol can use up to 50 percent less water than the production of a gallon of petroleum gasoline.

The importance of federal biofuels research at the Department of Energy cannot be overstated. These investments allow for further development of advanced biofuels by using the technology infrastructure from first generation biofuels. Despite this vital ongoing work at our National Labs, the draconian cuts to biofuels research programs in the President’s budget threaten to derail current research priorities.

Regulations like the RFS are making a difference at the state level as well. When I was in the Oregon State Senate, we passed a bill to adopt a clean fuels standard to lower the carbon intensity of transportation fuels by 10 percent over a ten-year period. Earlier this year, the Oregon Economic Council found that within the first three quarters of implementing the clean fuels standard, more than 589,000 tons of climate pollution had been displaced. The standard has also helped grow area businesses, such as SeQuential, in Portland, Oregon, which converts used cooking oil into biodiesel.

Also in my district, Summit Foods makes delicious apple chips and they sell dried blueberries to places like Panera. They use the food waste to make a fuel called Thunderbolt for race cars. Companies in the region give their food waste to Summit Foods to convert it into the fuel – all of the products would otherwise go into the landfill. Racecar and race boat drivers love this fuel. They get 30-50% more horsepower. One customer was never able to get a race boat to go over 200 miles per hour, but with Thunderbolt he can. Traditional petroleum race fuel costs \$10-20 a gallon. Thunderbolt costs about half that. Racecar drivers are proud to purchase a product made in Oregon that is great for their cars and the environment.

As I've said in the past, our nation's long-term economic and energy security is tied to our ability to diversify our energy portfolio and to transition to lower carbon energy sources. The development of first generation and advanced biofuels, whether through market innovation or federally funded research, can help us achieve these goals and should be encouraged by this Committee.

I look forward to the discussion about how both federal research and private sector innovation are helping our country move forward in the development of biofuels. With that I yield back the balance of my time.