

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Marc Veasey (D-TX)
of the Subcommittee on Energy

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

“Examining Advancements in Biofuels: Balancing Federal Research and Market Innovation”
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. Biofuels play an important role in diversifying our transportation fuel. They are produced right here in the United States and they provide a much safer source of octane for our fuels than MTBE. By replacing MTBE, biofuels help prevent harmful contaminants from reaching our drinking water and soil.

The growth of conventional biofuels, or corn ethanol, has helped launch the advanced biofuels industry, which has the potential to provide significant environmental benefits to our supply of transportation fuels. However, I am not suggesting that there are no potential drawbacks to take into account. As we set our national biofuels policy, we should continue to consider the concerns regarding land use change, potential degradation of certain engines, legacy fleets, recreational boaters, and access to a variety of fuel types. We should accurately weigh these factors right alongside the benefits that we receive in emissions reductions, energy security, fuel diversification, and economic growth. It is my hope that we will hear a practical assessment of biofuels that accurately weighs these costs and benefits from today’s panelists.

However, I want to alert you all that we will hear ideological attacks on the Renewable Fuel Standard and even on the role of DOE’s bioenergy research programs. These attacks are not based on rigorous analyses or thoughtful critiques. This is pure partisan ideology – an ideology that would have us decimate our research enterprise as we have seen proposed in both the Trump budget and the Heritage Foundation’s “blueprints.” Abandoning our investments in innovation and emerging markets is not a recipe for economic growth. It is a path to make the U.S. less competitive and less attractive for further business investments.

The other criticism of biofuels that we will hear today is a scientific one, and one that we should all welcome. Dr. DeCicco will inform us of his concerns with how we account for life-cycle emissions of corn ethanol. The scientific debate on this is continuing to play out. As policy-makers, I think it is our responsibility to listen and do our best to follow the guidance of the scientific consensus when legislating. That applies to as broad as climate change or as narrow as emissions modeling of biofuels. While I look forward to hearing and considering the scientific dissent offered during this hearing, it does not mean we should throw out the work of the collection of scientists at our national labs and universities. I hope we can hear from other scientists in the future that may provide additional perspectives on this issue.

On that note, I am proud to offer my strong support to DOE's scientists, including those at the national laboratories and universities across the country. They are doing valuable work that has empowered researchers in the public and private sector to make the U.S. the leader in bioenergy research. I am sure we will hear more from Dr. Gilna from Oak Ridge on that very issue.

As we consider an appropriations bill this week that would provide funding for DOE, I strongly encourage my colleagues to stand against any attempts to cut vital research at the Department. If the House bill were signed into law as is, the bioenergy research centers would receive a severe cut. The private sector will not be able to continue the research that has been left undone because the federal government cuts them. If we want to maintain U.S. leadership in this field, we need to advocate for consistent and robust R&D funding.

I look forward to hearing from Ms. Skor about where she sees the future of this industry and how we can accelerate the path to utilizing next generation biofuels. As I am sure we will hear from her testimony, the market for transportation fuels is incredibly competitive, but it is far from an actual free market. It has numerous barriers to entry and hidden subsidies that those in the energy industry have enjoyed for the past century.

With that said, I am glad to see the U.S. biofuels industry is vibrant today and I look forward to continuing to expand consumer choice across the transportation sector.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.