

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality hearing entitled "Alternative Transportation Fuels: An Overview"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY
HEARING ENTITLED "ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION FUELS: AN OVERVIEW"
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Mr. Chairman, thank for you holding this important hearing. Today we turn our attention to alternative transportation fuels, a topic that has frequently been at the center of the Committee's work on energy issues.

Our country's dependence on foreign sources of energy is a well-known deficiency in our energy policy and has been for decades. According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), in 2005 the U.S. consumed approximately 20 million barrels of crude oil per day — 60 percent of which was imported. Alternatives to petroleum-based transportation fuel are a critical component of enhancing our Nation's energy security.

This Committee advanced the cause of alternative fuels in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 by creating the renewable fuel program, which required that a certain percentage of our retail gasoline supply be comprised of renewable fuel. By most assessments, that program has been a success. For 2006, the program required the gasoline supply to contain a minimum of 4 billion gallons of renewable fuel. Thanks to the productivity of American agriculture and the ingenuity of entrepreneurs who joined this emerging market, the number of gallons actually produced for 2006 was 5 billion gallons. Most analysts agree that we will meet the 2012 requirement for 7.5 billion gallons much sooner than the law requires.

This is all good news. The question now becomes what else should we be do to encourage the use of alternative fuels. I note the vast majority of ethanol produced in this country is derived from corn kernels, but there are other feedstocks that can play an important role in ethanol production, such as cellulose. In addition, there are other alternative fuels that we should examine to see what role they can play in our fuel mix, including biodiesel and liquid fuels derived from coal. We have witnesses here today who can speak to those issues. Another witness will examine the various impacts of alternative fuels on climate change, a critical perspective given this Committee's focus on climate policy. I look forward to their testimony.

There are other issues that I hope the Subcommittee will continue to examine in future hearings. We must find ways to increase biofuel infrastructure so the more than six million consumers who already own flexible fuel vehicles can actually purchase alternative fuel. We must continue to examine ways to increase the number of flexible fuel vehicles. Any actions on these issues must also account for how they affect our broader efforts to address climate change and enhance energy security.

I thank the Chairman for this time and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

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