

OPENING STATEMENT

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Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Markup: "H.R. 5143, the H-Prize Act of 2006"
May 3, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I am pleased to be here today for the markup on H.R. 5143, *The H-Prize Act of 2006*. I would like to thank Mr. Inglis for taking leadership on this important issue and I am proud to have introduced this creative legislation with the gentleman from South Carolina.

It is obvious to all of us here the damage being caused by our current energy situation. Gas prices have skyrocketed over the last few weeks, inflicting pain on our constituents and on our economy. But the costs not only affect our pocketbooks, they affect our health and safety. We cannot continue the pollution of our environment and we cannot continue to rely on energy sources from unstable parts of the world. We must find a new solution to our energy needs.

Hydrogen has great potential to be a solution. But the technical and economic barriers are significant. By focusing specifically on hydrogen, the H-prize will help us confront and solve these challenges. This will be done by rewarding innovation for specific advances in storage, production, utilization, and distribution, and also awarding one grand prize for a special breakthrough in hydrogen energy.

The environmental promise of hydrogen is also great. Hydrogen produces no emission besides water as an energy source. Zero polluting emissions. But right now, hydrogen is most efficiently created by using fossil fuels, which is not the most environmentally-friendly or secure method. That is why the H-prize rewards the development of more efficient ways to use renewable energy sources to create hydrogen, so we can lessen our greenhouse gas emissions and improve our air quality.

America has been at the forefront of new technologies for more than a century because our society encourages creativity and imagination, while protecting property rights and promoting entrepreneurship. As we heard from our four distinguished witnesses last week, prizes can have the potential to spur innovation and ingenuity. It is important to emphasize that the H-prize will not replace the scientific research that the Federal Government funds. But the H-Prize will tap into American's creativity and imagination to solve one of the greatest problems facing us today.

Breakthroughs in hydrogen R&D, which I believe this bill will induce, unfortunately will not lower energy prices this year or next. But it will help our country address our long-term energy needs in a unique way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for the H-prize bill. I yield back the balance of my time.