



Science Committee
Ranking Member

Energy and Commerce
Committee

News from
Congressman
Bart Gordon

Tennessee's Sixth Congressional District

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Gordon Welcomes MTSU's Ricketts to Capitol Hill Energy Hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Bart Gordon welcomed distinguished Middle Tennessee State University professor Cliff Ricketts to Capitol Hill as he testified at today's (May 17) congressional hearing on emerging energy technologies.

Gordon invited Ricketts to participate as an expert witness on plug-in hybrid vehicles at the meeting of the House Science Committee's Energy Subcommittee.

"Dr. Ricketts is an asset to MTSU and he was an essential resource today for the Committee," said Gordon, the Ranking Member of the House Science Committee. "His innovative work shows us what is possible in this field, as well as the obstacles we need to overcome as we search for gasoline alternatives."

Ricketts, a professor of Agricultural Education and Acting Director of MTSU's School of Agribusiness and Agriscience, joined five other expert witnesses from across the country in testifying today. He has conducted alternative fuel and advanced vehicle research since 1978 and has run engines off ethanol from corn, methane from cow manure, soybean oil, hydrogen from water, and has a solar/electric truck. He held the land speed record for hydrogen vehicles at the Bonneville Salt Flats for 15 years.

Ricketts currently has a system in place using a 10kw solar unit to generate electricity to go into the Murfreesboro Electric Grid Lines within the Tennessee Valley Authority to bank energy for later use in charging his electric/hybrid truck or generating hydrogen from water to run his internal combustion engine car.

The only two energy sources needed to run his vehicles are sun and water.

"I believe the alleviation of the future U.S. energy crisis lies within plug-in flex fuel hybrid vehicles," Dr. Ricketts told the subcommittee. "At MTSU we are running engines off sun and/or water. We are working on a vehicle that runs off most any fuel."

The Subcommittee discussed the viability of plug-in hybrid vehicles and their potential role in reducing U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources, as well as perceived environmental and economic benefits.

"We must explore every avenue of research and new technology if the U.S. plans to remain a leader in innovation," said Gordon. "Making sure that conventional and plug-in hybrid vehicles, alternative fuels and other options are accessible is part of that job. High energy prices are hurting consumers, but tools like these could speed relief."

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Gordon has introduced legislation to address the challenges of converting new energy technologies for commercial use. Gordon's bill, H.R. 4435, establishes an agency within the U.S. Department of Energy modeled after the Department of Defense's successful Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was responsible for creating revolutionary technologies like unmanned and stealth aircraft and the Internet.

The bill would promote research and development at industry, university and federal labs and bridge the gap between laboratory research and practical applications.

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Editor's Note: A photo of Gordon and Ricketts will follow in an e-mail.

Photo Caption: U.S. Rep. Bart Gordon, left, and Dr. Cliff Ricketts discuss Rickett's work with hybrid electric vehicles prior to a May 17 hearing of the House Science Committee's Energy Subcommittee. Gordon invited Ricketts, acting director of MTSU's School of Agribusiness and Agriscience, to testify as an expert witness on emerging energy technologies.