

OPENING STATEMENT
RANKING MEMBER RALPH HALL (R-TX)
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP: HR 2965, HR 2729 and HR 1622

JUNE 24, 2009

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Today we're marking up three bills, H.R. 2965, Enhancing Small Business Research and Innovation Act of 2009; H.R. 2729, to authorize the designation of National Environmental Research Parks by the Secretary of Energy, and for other purposes; H.R. 1622, to provide for a program of research, development, and demonstration on natural gas vehicles.

H.R. 2965 extends and makes important changes to the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer program (STTR), which, as their names indicate, fund innovation and technology development at America's small businesses. I support this bill, and note that both the committee and the full House passed a very similar version last year. I'm pleased that we're again able to advance this bill in a bipartisan fashion, working closely with the majority as well as our counterparts on the Small Business Committee. This has allowed us to build a strong legislative record on this program, which will serve us well as we aim to complete floor action and conference negotiations before the program expires on July 31st.

H.R. 2729 will authorize and make permanent the existing seven National Environmental Research Parks across the country. The National Environmental Research Parks are outdoor laboratories that provide opportunities for environmental studies on protected lands that act as buffers around Department of Energy (DOE) facilities. I commend Mr. Lujan on his dedication to the Parks and for authoring this legislation. I will be offering an amendment to the bill that came about as a result of consultation with the Parks and with the majority staff to clarify that the parks and the sites they are located on shall continue to be run as they currently are.

H.R. 1622 reauthorizes the natural gas vehicle RD&D program that was created in the 1992 Energy Policy Act. This bill was introduced by Rep. John Sullivan of Oklahoma and is cosponsored by myself and Rep. Lucas on this committee. On a well-to-wheels basis, natural gas vehicles produce 22% less greenhouse gases than comparable diesel vehicles and 29% less than gasoline vehicles. In 2007, natural gas vehicles displaced 250 million gallons of petroleum in the US. In the next 17 years, the industry's goal is to grow that to 10 billion gallons. Over 60% of the petroleum used in America is imported – much of it from countries that are unstable or do not have the best interests of the US in mind. Meanwhile, almost 98% of the natural gas used in America is produced in North America – 85% in the US and the rest in Canada.

Just last Thursday, the report by the Potential Gas Committee, the authority on gas supplies, shows the United States holds far larger reserves than previously thought -- 35 percent more than the previous report showed in 2006. Natural gas makes sense as a

transition fuel, and this bill will help us get more natural gas vehicles on the road. I will be offering an amendment to H.R. 1622 that will simply clear up some wording in order to avoid potential jurisdictional issues.

With that I yield the balance of my time to Congressman Adrian Smith for additional comments on the H.R. 2965.