

New Energy Bill Dedicates \$1 million for Connecticut-Based Efforts in Advancing Fuel-Cell Technology

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 25, 2005

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman John B. Larson secured \$1 million for Connecticut-based research and development efforts to expand the use of fuel-cell automobiles as part of the Fiscal Year 2006 Energy and Water Development Appropriations (H.R. 2419) bill the House approved Tuesday night.

“Fuel cells hold the opportunity of liberating us from our dependence on foreign oil,” Larson said. “Connecticut based companies are pioneering this technology and are offering us the potential of producing within our borders a clean, reliable, limitless energy alternative.”

“As we have seen at the pumps, the price of oil has soared,” Larson added. “With no curbs of consumption in sight, the cost to our wallets and national security will only steepen.”

Jan van Dokkum, president of UTC Power, said Wednesday that he appreciated Congressman Larson's efforts in advancing fuel-cell technology. UTC Power is developing technology that will allow hydrogen fuel cells to operate in extreme cold-weather conditions.

“Fuel cell automobiles must be capable of operating in the same cold temperatures as today's vehicles if they are to gain broad market acceptance,” van Dokkum said. “Although we have made progress in developing all-weather fuel cells, more work is required to ensure that they can operate even in the most hostile conditions.

“We deeply appreciate Congressman Larson's leadership in securing funding for this initiative. His efforts will move us closer to the day the world can enjoy the tangible environmental and energy security benefits that automotive fuel cells promise.”

Earlier Tuesday, Larson joined other House Democrats in supporting a motion to allow consideration of an amendment to the appropriations bill proposed by Rep. Allyson Schwartz of Pennsylvania to increase funding for the research and development of new energy sources. But the Republican-controlled Rules Committee blocked the amendment from reaching the floor of the house for possible inclusion into the appropriations bill by a straight party-line vote. The motion offered on the House floor, which would have overturned the Rules Committee action, also failed on a party-line vote. Larson said he was disappointed that once again narrow partisan interests have been pushed ahead of the nation's.

“The blinders have to come off,” Larson said. “We need an energy policy of options. We need an energy policy that doesn't wait until crisis is upon us before we act. Congress has to look ahead now. It is imperative to give our full support to the development of new sources of energy.”

The appropriations bill included a total of \$183 million for hydrogen technologies of which \$84 million is designated specifically for research and development of fuel cells.

On Monday evening, Congressman Larson received the US Fuel Cell Council's 2005 Pathfinder award for his leadership on fuel cell issues in the House of Representatives.

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