LARSON PROVIDES TESTIMONY ON BENEFITS OF FUEL CELLS BEFORE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) submitted testimony today on the benefits of fuel cell technology and its strategic role in addressing the California energy crisis for a hearing held before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality. The subcommittee was seeking testimony from Members of Congress on the current energy crisis in California and on overall national energy policy.

"I hope to bring before the Committee and my colleagues from the western United States a potential solution to many of the current energy problems facing California and its neighboring states," said Larson.

Larson's prepared testimony highlighted the clear benefits in using fuel cell technology to address the California energy situation that can also be applied in other areas throughout the country, such as its extremely high efficiency output and its ability to provide reliable base load power, increase grid flexibility, and reduce harmful environmental emissions. He also stressed the important role government has to play incubating this advanced technology for commercial use, and spoke about his legislation, the Energy Independence Act, which he is working toward reintroducing in the 107th Congress.

Larson also praised the contributions of fuel cell power plants manufactured by International Fuel Cells in South Windsor, Connecticut that are already operating in California. A total of eight IFC PC25 units are currently operating in California, including power plants at a hospital in Riverside, a hotel in Irvine, a jail in Santa Barbara, the South Coast Air Quality Management District Headquarters outside Los Angeles, and the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting facility in Calabasas, California, outside of Los Angeles.

In his testimony, Larson stated: “I believe that the implementation of fuel cell technology could significantly improve California’s immediate energy needs and their extraordinary efficiency would improve the overall national energy portfolio. This technology has been with us long enough to have powered the Gemini and Apollo spacecraft, and is still powering NASA’s fleet of space shuttles. It has finally matured to a point where stationary power plants are providing reliable commercial power today and is prepared to demonstrate its advantages to the general public in clean, quiet, and efficient residential, bus, and car applications.”

Larson became a leader in the development of energy policy during the 106th Congress, sponsoring the Energy Independence Act (H.R. 5585) to promote development of fuel cell technology and the Oil Price Safeguard Act (H.R. 3543) to create a trigger mechanism to release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) during sustained crude oil price spikes. He cosponsored H.R. 5339 to provide tax credits for the purchase of stationary fuel cell systems; he also cosponsored legislation (H.R. 3608) and worked with a coalition of Northeastern members to create the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, authorized in H.R. 2884, and funded with $8 million in H.R. 4578. Larson fought to increase Connecticut’s emergency funding under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by $12 million last year, and worked with then-President Clinton to secure the early release of $400 million in nation-wide emergency LIHEAP funding at the beginning of this winter season.

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