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Inglis expects high gas prices to continue
Congressman says growing demand punctuates need for alternatives

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A growing worldwide demand for oil means gasoline prices will continue to increase, U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, R-4th, told an audience at Hendricks branch library in Simpsonville.

But Inglis said South Carolina is in a unique position to benefit in the long run because it can be a key player in the "reinvention of the car," which would lessen the nation's thirst for foreign oil.

Although prices may fluctuate with minor decreases, "I would not expect them to go down. In fact, \$3 a gallon will become a fond memory," he said.

Inglis made his comments before about 75 people who gathered in a library meeting room July 5 to quiz Inglis on a variety of topics during the first stop in his "Walk Talks," a series of seven town hall meetings throughout the 4th District.

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Inglis said disruptions in supply and delivery, such as Hurricane Katrina or civil unrest in Nigeria, are only surface waves on a rising tide pushing higher costs.

The rising tide is called China and India.

"China is now the No. 2 consumer of oil in the world. India's economy is maybe a decade or two behind them," Inglis said. "As they come into their own, you get two major new customers that are demanding oil. So that means the price is not going to go down. They may go down temporarily as the waves are affected but the tide is rising."

When asked why he did not vote to allow drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Inglis said he no longer supports the "drill more holes" strategy.

It would take 10 years before ANWR would produce about 1 million barrels of oil a day. In 10 years, the nation is projected to consume 27 million barrels a day


"So ANWR is 1/27th of the solution," he said. "You end pursuing something that takes your eye of the prize."

The prize, he said is alternative fuels.

"My hope is that in 10 years we really get with it in a new kind of frenzy to hydrogen," he said.

The state is in an enviable position to be a key player in alternative fuels.

He pointed to the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research, the University of South

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Carolina Fuel Cell Center and the University Transportation Center at South Carolina State University.

But even more important is the technical savvy in storing hydrogen that has been developed over 50 years at the Savannah River Site.

"It gives us the opportunity to be a real participant in the reinvention of the car, to move toward fuels of the future and smart cars," Inglis said. "South Carolina has a real story to tell about our expertise in hydrogen."

The national and local interests are aligned in this instance, he said. Developing new energy sources would mean jobs for South Carolina and energy security for the nation.

"In the future we will be able to say to those Arab oil folks, 'we just don't need you as much as we use to,' which would be a great, new day for America," he said.
