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Inglis pumps up hydrogen *Congressman and others launch incentives to develop power*

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis wants the federal government to provide researchers with hefty incentives to reach for the stars in developing hydrogen as a viable fuel for automobiles.

Inglis, R-SC, along with research representatives from Clemson University, the University of South Carolina and the Greenville County School District, announced plans Monday to file legislation creating an H-Prize as a major incentive to reward achievements in overcoming scientific and technical barriers associated with the transition to a hydrogen economy.

Inglis also announced the Society for Automotive Engineers is launching a fuel-cell challenge in area high schools. The SAE is working with the school district to provide hydrogen fuel-cell kits that will allow teams of students to build model cars fueled with hydrogen.

Creating interest in students is vital, said Bill Whitney, president of the Urban League of the Upstate.

Advertisement "You have to get them excited," he said. And "you need to work with kids who don't have much access" to the programs that might interest them in science and math.

Inglis said he expects to file the legislation in the next couple of weeks.

The prize, to be awarded within the next 10 years, is modeled on the successful Ansari X-Prize, which awarded \$10 million for entrepreneurial space flight.

"If we can get presidential lift, it could be a means of focusing entrepreneurs and researchers on the goal of a hydrogen economy," he said.

"This H-Prize is a very interesting possibility," said David Bodde, Clemson's director of innovation and public policy.

Inglis' plans are to set the prize up at three levels -- \$1 million for technical breakthroughs, up to \$4 million for prototypes and up to \$100 million for the team that puts it all together, "the ones who make it so we actually drive hydrogen cars," he said.

A major achievement of such a prize, Bodde said, is that it focuses the attention and talents of researchers in a variety of fields who may see different ways of achieving a hydrogen-fueled economy. The time frame also is such that it gives time to build a research program focusing on hydrogen technology.

The prize "is a pretty cost-effective way to go" because no money is spent until a result is achieved, he said.

South Carolina has a chance to become a major player in a hydrogen economy, he said.

"We are competitive," he said. But "it is a worldwide competition."

A major prize like this can generate public interest and is a significant monetary reward as well as the recognition that comes from it, Inglis said.

However, "in a lot of ways, the market will be the reward. You will have people wanting to buy your product," he said.

Inglis said the idea for the prize arose when supporters of a hydrogen economy tried to figure out how to kick-start the necessary research.

"We've been looking for as non-governmental approach as possible with the government incentivizing a breakthrough to the hydrogen economy," he said, adding that he hopes private parties also could help fund the prize. Still, "we're aiming for something big that will require some presidential lift."

The prize announcement was made at J.L. Mann High School to show what Inglis said he believes the future to be.

All of the county's high schools are being offered the chance to participate in the model building project, he said. Since the kits cost between \$75 and \$125, he said SAE could be looking for partners to aid with the project.

Inglis said that such projects could build student excitement for science.

"If you can touch it and feel it and watch it run, you can learn science," he said.

Students need a connection to their world to help motivate them to study physics, chemistry or other science courses.

Bodde agreed.

"To watch the eyes of the kids light up, that is the excitement of technology," he said.

The search for the potential transition to a hydrogen economy "reminds me of 1959 when the first artificial satellite went up," he said. His mother told her family that it was their patriotic duty to study math and science and beat the Russians. He'd like for that type of excitement to be generated for alternative energy sources.
