

Testimony Of

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Before The

United States House Of Representatives

Select Committee On Energy Independence And Global Warming

Concerning

Plugging Into Energy Independence With 150 MPG Vehicles

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Cars, Plugs And 100,000 Airplanes

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Mr. Chairman, Congressmen Inslee and Sensenbrenner, and other Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on this distinguished panel.

Although I have been a Senior Advisor to the President and am currently the junior Senator from California running for President, it is only in a world of entertainment and fiction. I am honored to sit before you today because you are the genuine article, and I know that when it comes to leadership and shaping our nation's future, you have the ability to be the real stars.

Like many Americans, I have watched with increasing frustration as our country drifts under the status quo, without any concrete national policy for energy independence. With the issue of global warming entering the cultural zeitgeist, it seemed that might break the deadlock. But so far it has not.

And now, in a war on terror in which our oil addiction helps fund our enemies, we ask our best and brightest to serve, and sometimes die, at least in part to protect our oil needs. Surely, we here State side can and must use this critical moment in time to actually begin implementing a responsible and practical plan on the road to energy independence.

A large segment of the public already knows this: I believe American consumers are patriotic and smart; they want to do their part. They have heard of the potential of electric cars, the promise of fuel cells and the dream of hydrogen. But today, and even in the near future, they can not yet go out and buy any of these potentials, promises or dreams.

And that is why I have come here today. I want to suggest that, with your help and the help of your colleagues, we may in fact be able to pave the way to use existing

breakthrough technology to bring dramatic, far more efficient “green” cars to the American public now.

I am here to use whatever attention I may attract to tell Members of Congress and our patriotic consumers that new American technology exists today that may:

- transform most conventional hybrids getting 40 to 50 MPG into plug-in hybrids that can get 100 to 150 MPG,
- go 40 miles on a single 4 hour charge that costs 60 cents from a standard electric outlet, and
- save the average commuter over \$1,000/year and the fleet user up to \$3,500/ year in gasoline costs while saving 100 tons of CO2 emissions over the life of each converted vehicle.

Recently I heard about an American company from Massachusetts called A123Systems. The reports were that they had developed, and were already marketing, millions of revolutionary batteries that were far more powerful, smaller, safer and longer lasting than anything else on the market. The batteries were being bundled in a module that fit in the spare tire well of most pre-existing hybrids, increasing the on board electric storage by many multiples, and cutting gasoline consumption by 80% and emissions by 60%.

Now, I’m not a MENSA member, but I play smart guys on TV. So I wanted to know more. I heard their battery technology had been chosen by GM and others for their plug-in hybrids due out in 3 to 5 years. I read the independent assessments done last summer by the Department of Energy’s premier Argonne National Lab in Chicago. Using a standard Prius with the plug-in conversion module, their urban test protocols resulted in 150 to 225 MPG.

I then checked with people who had direct experiences using these cars and they confirmed that these results were sustainable, reliable and most importantly, the cost was not prohibitive.

A \$22,000 Prius (or other hybrid like the Escape) and a module initially costing around \$6,500 to \$9,500 (depending on how far you commute) puts you into the car of tomorrow using much less high priced gasoline for around \$30,000. And while that is still a lot of money for the average American family, it is a whole lot more accessible to more people than a promise or a potential or a dream – particularly with a modest transition tax credit to stimulate early use, increasing sales and falling prices.

I found this new information to be amazing and exciting. And with this education, I decided to stop observing our energy stalemate from the sidelines and come before you today to ask:

Why not exercise your leadership right now to put in place a wartime – like mobilization plan to find out if this new 150 MPG technology, running successfully on streets around the country today, can cut our oil consumption by 80% starting now?

The patriotic and smart American consumer is looking to Washington for the kind of leadership and action that can answer this question quickly.

Certainly the Congress should be able to provide the same kind of early user tax credits for these plug-in modules that were so critical to bringing down prices and jump starting the current growth in demand for standard hybrids. And by requiring the technology to pass the appropriate safety and environmental testing for the consumer to qualify for any tax credit, the concerns of any reasonable skeptic also would be met.

Obviously, game changing advances are sometimes met with indifference or even resistance from the Establishment. But that said, can't our powerful Detroit automotive industry be given the message, together with effective incentives, to speed up their conversion to plug-in hybrids using this or any other technological advance?

In the West Wing, someone once asked my character Sam Seaborn why he was not practicing law at some big Firm; why he was grinding it out for much less pay in a life devoted to public policy. And he answered with this story:

“ In 1940 our Armed Forces weren’t among the twelve most favorable in the world. But obviously we were going to fight a big war and Roosevelt said the United States would produce 50,000 planes in the next four years. Everybody said it was a joke and it was because it turned out we produced 100,000 planes. Gave the Air Force an armada that would block the sun.”

That is the spirit we need here. And let’s face it: going from gasoline powered cars to plug-in hybrids should be easier than it was to retro-fit the entire auto industry to create those 100,000 airplanes.

I can’t yet be certain, but wouldn’t it be great if an American company has invented the breakthrough technology that can restore American leadership in the new frontier of transportation? If the use of my public profile here today helps spread the news of that possibility, then it will have been a day well spent.

I am so excited by the potential of this technology, that I have asked for one of the preproduction prototypes to show off in California, where the visionary leadership there is already exploring parallel incentives. I will fit right in, since California already has the largest number of hybrids on the road.

So, in the end, the choice before this nation and its Congressional leadership is simple: waiting years for any viable, mass-marketed plug-ins under the status quo of slower moving automotive bureaucracies or a major push now to jump start the conversion of plug-ins from the growing millions of hybrids coming on to our roads.

You know, the name of this Committee says it all: Energy Independence and Global Warming. If you choose to support this new American technology, you could be addressing both issues at once with the quickest and most practical action possible. With

what is at stake in the world today, it is not that much to ask. Unfortunately, we have done far more in the pursuit of much less.

And yet, when inspired our government is capable of great things. As I once said on the West Wing:

“Over the past half century we’ve split the atom. We’ve spliced the gene and we’ve roamed Tranquility Base. We’ve reached for the stars and never have we been closer to having them within our grasp. New science, new technology is making the difference between life and death and so we need a national commitment equal to this unparalleled moment of possibility”

That was fiction. But we are here today to deal with reality. The stars are aligned, the time is now, and patriotic and smart Americans await this Congress’ successful efforts.

Thank you for your time and your service to our country.