



Bravo for Roscoe! (Roscoe Bartlett Votes No on Energy Bill based on Ethanol Mandate Expansion)

Posted by [Nate Hagens](#) on December 6, 2007 - 9:09pm

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

Tags: [energy bill](#), [roscoe bartlett](#) [[list all tags](#)]

Roscoe Bartlett seems to always be 2 steps ahead. For several years now he has been speaking, often to only a few Members, on the issues surrounding Peak Oil and our nations need to change our oil intensive way of life. Now, as House leaders are lauding a new Energy Bill (details of which Robert Rapier highlighted [here](#)) that will create agricultural jobs and make us depend on the 'Midwest instead of the Middle East', Congressman Bartlett is again ahead of the pack. Knowing that all energy is not created equal, and that biofuels have large costs in terms of energy, water demands, pesticide and fertilizer use, as well as competition for food, the science-trained Congressman voted nay on the Energy bill which included a more than doubling of corn ethanol production over the next decade. He references the National Academy of Science [report on The Implications of Biofuel Production on US Water Supplies](#), and is looking ahead to where we really need to change - efficiency, conservation and new ways of structuring our society. Below the fold is the press release from the Congressmans website.

Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-6-MD) supports a change in America's energy policies to encourage conservation of finite fossil fuels, increase efficiency and promote development of alternative domestic renewable resources. However, today, he voted NO on amendments to H.R. 6 because of the Senate's addition to expand the biofuels ethanol mandate. Congressman Bartlett was an original cosponsor of H.R. 6 when it was introduced in January 2007 and voted to support final passage of the previous comprehensive House energy bill, H.R. 3221. Both excluded expansions in the ethanol mandate. The Economist magazine [reported today](#) that U.S. subsidies for ethanol are raising food prices worldwide reversing historical trends.

"I welcome the Senate's addition to strengthen CAFÉ standards to increase gas mileage of new cars and trucks," said Congressman Bartlett said, "However, the hype that using food crops for fuel, such as corn ethanol or soy biodiesel and the hope that cellulosic ethanol could achieve independence from imported oil is extremely harmful."

Congressman Bartlett explained, "With mounting evidence of the harmful effects of the 2005 Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) mandate for 7.5 billion gallons of corn ethanol, I could not in good conscience vote to double that mandate. Corn ethanol and soy biodiesel can never replace more than a drop in the bucket of our gas and diesel use. However, corn prices doubled due to the 2005 mandate which harms Maryland's dairy and chicken farmers and raises the price of food which hurts low income people. That is why livestock farmers and food manufacturers oppose expanding the corn ethanol and soy biodiesel mandate in this bill."

Congressman Bartlett noted, "The U.S. has only 2 percent of known oil reserves. We use 25 percent of the world's oil and import two-thirds of what we are using. We pump our reserves four times faster than the rest of the world. There will be a day after tomorrow and we have to slow down the depletion of America's oil and natural gas to preserve some for future generations. I hope the Senate will make changes in this bill that will allow me to support it."

Congressman Bartlett pointed out that in June 2006 the National Academies of Science (NAS) released a study that concluded there was a very limited potential from corn ethanol and soy biodiesel. Discounting for fossil fuel inputs, Americans would replace only 2.4% of gasoline consumption if the entire U.S. corn crop was devoted to corn ethanol. Similarly, if the entire soybean crop was used to make soy biodiesel, that would replace only 2.9% of Americans' diesel consumption. ([source](#)). Two of the NAS study co-authors wrote in the Washington Post on March 25, 2007 that Americans could save more gasoline if [we kept our tires inflated and our car engines tuned](#).

A March 26, 2007 study prepared for the Dairy Farmers of America found 11% of America's corn crop was used for corn ethanol in 2005. That grew to 18% in 2006/07 and is projected to increase to @25% of corn crop 2007/08. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association projects the doubled mandate for 15 billion gallons of corn ethanol would require roughly 41 percent of U.S. corn production.

Congressman Bartlett said

"there is a lot of hope but little evidence that cellulosic ethanol could replace gasoline. If all of our corn and all of our soybeans grown on our best land replaces just a fraction of our gasoline and diesel, I seriously doubt what contributions can be provided by cellulosic ethanol which is still in development. We might mine our soils of organic matter to make fuel for a little while, but I don't think that's sustainable."

The Chamber of Commerce recently reported, "**The bill supposedly calls for a renewable fuels mandate of 36 billion gallons by 2022, with 21 billion of these gallons to be met with "advanced biofuels," or non-corn-based biofuels. The bill does not, however, adequately address such critical issues as: (1) where the U.S. intends to secure enough water (from an already-scarce supply) so that it may grow enough corn and other biomass to meet the mandate; (2) how the nation will protect against formation of "dead zones" of oxygen-depleted water caused by increased farming and irrigation to meet the mandate; (3) how the U.S. intends to transport 36 billion gallons of ethanol, given that current pipeline systems are not compatible; and (4) the effect the increased burning of ethanol will have on background levels of ozone, a pollutant currently regulated by EPA under the Clean Air Act.**"

Congressman Bartlett said, "I recommend everyone read a speech given fifty years ago on May 14, 1957 by the father of America's nuclear navy, Admiral Hyman Rickover. He was so prescient. He pointed out that fossil fuels aren't forever and that we have a moral obligation to leave younger generations some oil and natural gas." The entire speech (pdf) is posted on Congressman

“Our civilization rests upon a technological base which requires enormous quantities of fossil fuels. What assurance do we then have that our energy needs will continue to be supplied by fossil fuels: The answer is - in the long run - none.

...In the face of the basic fact that fossil fuel reserves are finite, the exact length of time these reserves will last is important in only one respect: the longer they last, the more time do we have, to invent ways of living off renewable or substitute energy sources and to adjust our economy to the vast changes which we can expect from such a shift. Fossil fuels resemble capital in the bank. A prudent and responsible parent will use his capital sparingly in order to pass on to his children as much as possible of his inheritance. A selfish and irresponsible parent will squander it in riotous living and care not one whit how his offspring will fare.”

Congressman Bartlett said, “In that same speech, Rickover warned that using food for fuel was unrealistic and short-sighted:

“Wood fuel and farm wastes are dubious as substitutes because of growing food requirements to be anticipated. Land is more likely to be used for food production than for tree crops; farm wastes may be more urgently needed to fertilize the soil than to fuel machines.”

Additional information and resources about energy from Congressman Bartlett's website are available at <http://bartlett.house.gov/EnergyUpdates/>.

=====

Roscoe Bartlett - a scientist, and my kind of politician - thinking smartly about the future and willing to discuss hard truths.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).