

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICAN CAUCUS

RALPH HALL (R-TX), RANKING MEMBER

[HTTP://GOP.SCIENCE.HOUSE.GOV](http://gop.science.house.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2009

Press Contact: Zachary Kurz

zachary.kurz@mail.house.gov

COMMITTEE APPROVES BILLS TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION, ADVANCE NATURAL GAS VEHICLES, AND MAKE NERPS PERMANENT

Washington, D.C.- The Science and Technology Committee today unanimously approved three bills with bipartisan support: H.R. 2965, the Enhancing Small Business Research and Innovation Act of 2009; H.R. 2729, to authorize the designation of National Environmental Research Parks by the Secretary of Energy, and for other purposes; and H.R. 1622, to provide for a program of research, development, and demonstration on natural gas vehicles.

H.R. 1622 reauthorizes the natural gas vehicle research, development and demonstration program that was created in the 1992 Energy Policy Act. This bill was introduced by **Rep. John Sullivan (R-OK)** and is cosponsored by Science and Technology Committee **Ranking Member Ralph Hall (R-TX)** and **Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK)**.

“Natural gas makes sense as a transition fuel, and this bill will help us get more natural gas vehicles on the road,” Hall said. “On a well-to-wheels basis, natural gas vehicles produce 22% less greenhouse gases than comparable diesel vehicles and 29% less than gasoline vehicles.”

In 2007, natural gas vehicles displaced 250 million gallons of petroleum in the U.S. In the next 17 years, the industry’s goal is to grow that to 10 billion gallons. Over 60% of the petroleum used in America is imported, while almost 98% of the natural gas used in America is produced in North America – 85% in the U.S. and the rest in Canada. Moreover, last Thursday a report by the Potential Gas Committee showed the United States holds 35% more reserves than the previous report showed in 2006.

Committee Member **Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA)**, who has previously driven a natural gas-powered vehicle, praised the goals of H.R. 1622. As the technology for expanded use of natural gas moves forward, Bilbray further encouraged the simultaneous advancement of technologies

that would allow vehicle owners to dispense natural gas at home, in order to curb the need for infrastructure to support natural gas fueling stations.

Ranking Member Hall also offered an amendment making technical changes to the language in order to avoid potential jurisdictional issues. The amendment passed by voice vote.

H.R. 2965 extends and makes important changes to the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer program (STTR), which fund nearly \$2.3 billion in support of innovation and technology development at America's small businesses. The Science and Technology Committee and the full House passed a similar version of this bill last year.

The bill includes important language authored by Technology and Innovation Subcommittee Ranking Member **Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE)** requiring the Small Business Administration's outreach efforts to give priority to rural areas. Smith noted that "these areas tend to have low participation in the programs but are nonetheless home to entrepreneurial and innovative small business owners who would benefit from increased outreach."

Pointing out that the Senate companion bill increases the funding set-aside for these programs at the expense of agencies' core research programs, Science and Technology Committee Vice Ranking Member **Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-MI)**, voiced strong support for maintaining the House language in the final bill. "By increasing the set-aside, we would only eat away at the base funding for research available to our scientific agencies," Ehlers said. "I would much rather see us fight for overall extramural research funding increases, which will equivalently benefit the innovation and tech transfer activities of these programs, and hope that the House conferees will stand strong on this issue in conference with the Senate."

H.R. 2729, cosponsored by Committee Member **Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL)**, authorizes and makes permanent the existing seven National Environmental Research Parks (NERPs) across the country. The NERPs are outdoor laboratories that provide opportunities for environmental studies on protected lands that act as buffers around Department of Energy facilities.

Ranking Member Hall offered an amendment to clarify that the parks and the sites they are located on shall continue to be run as they currently are. This amendment was drafted in consultation with the NERPs and was approved today by voice vote.

All three bills were unanimously passed out of Committee today by voice vote. For more information on these bills and to read full statements, please visit the [GOP Science and Technology Committee website](#).