Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on "Overview of the Renewable Fuel Standard: Government Perspectives"
June 26, 2013

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This is an exciting time for energy policy and for the possibilities created by our growing domestic energy abundance. Last week, this subcommittee held two hearings, one on the nation's potential for increased energy exports and the other on the benefits of affordable energy to the domestic manufacturing sector. Just a few short years ago, many would have scoffed at the suggestion that America could produce enough domestic energy to expand its exports, or that low natural gas prices would induce a manufacturing renaissance. But it is happening, and can continue to happen if we have the right policies in place.

And while we strive to make good use of the nation's coal, oil, and natural gas, we also need to allow renewable energy to be a part of the mix. But we need to make sure that it is done right, and that is why we are undertaking our deliberate review of the renewable fuel standard (RFS).

The committee started this review process with a series of bipartisan white papers on the RFS. Each white paper highlighted a particular subtopic and solicited input from stakeholders. As you can imagine, the response has been overwhelming, and I thank Ranking Member Waxman and his staff for working cooperatively with us and the commenters for their participation – I can assure them that their input will help inform our process.

And now, we move on to our first hearing, which will be this committee's first hearing specifically devoted to the RFS since the program was last revised in 2007. The purpose of this initial hearing is essentially to perform a check-up on the RFS – what has gone according to plan and what has not. No policy is perfect, especially one that is now more than five years old. It's time to assess the RFS in light of what we now know.

Today we commence our effort with three federal agencies that play a role in putting the RFS into action. Congress gave the reins of this program to EPA, and the agency's responsibilities are extensive. Several of these responsibilities require input from other agencies, including the Energy Information Administration and the Department of Agriculture.

This hearing will cover a number of issues, but I am particularly mindful of the impact of the RFS on the auto industry and on car owners. Fuels and vehicles operate as a system, and we need to ensure that provisions in the RFS are compatible with existing vehicles as well as the new cars and trucks that will be manufactured and sold in the years ahead.

One thing Congress could not have anticipated back in 2007 is the very ambitious new CAFE/GHG standards that will require a near doubling of fuel economy by 2025. Harmonizing these rules with the requirements of the RFS is just one issue for which a constructive debate is needed.

The white papers and having today's hearing have gotten the discussion off to a positive start. I look forward to working with all of the members of this committee in the coming weeks as we continue our oversight and work toward addressing the very real issues that implementation of the RFS presents going forward.

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