

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Environment Hearing on
“High Octane Fuels and High Efficiency Vehicles: Challenges and
Opportunities”
April 13, 2018

The Energy and Commerce Committee takes our obligation seriously to get fuels and vehicles policy right. A vehicle and the gas it runs on is a major expense for households as well as millions of small businesses, farms, and ranches. And the many companies that produce and sell fuels and vehicles employ millions of Americans and range in size from major automakers and refiners to smaller companies like Red Rock Biofuels, which is looking to help reduce the risk of wildfire in our forests by converting woody biomass into biofuel and jobs for the rural community of Lakeview, Oregon.

But getting the policy right isn't always easy, especially with complex and sometimes contentious issues like the Renewable Fuel Standard and vehicle fuel economy standards.

Today, we explore an idea to facilitate compliance with the RFS while also improving fuel economy. By transitioning to higher octane blends and vehicles whose engines are designed to maximize efficiency from those fuels, we could both incorporate more ethanol into the fuel supply while also increasing miles per gallon.

At first look, it seems like an elegant way to make both the RFS and CAFE standards work better together. Of course, whenever something sounds too good to be true, it very well may be, so we need to kick the proverbial tires of this policy idea before moving ahead. That is the purpose of today's hearing.

And we need to be especially mindful of the consumer impacts. We want a policy outcome that brings down the cost of driving. So questions about the impact on the price per gallon at the pump and on the sticker price of new vehicles will need to be addressed, as will questions whether this is the most cost-effective means to improve fuel economy and reduce emissions.

But while looking at these concerns, we also need to consider the upside potential of high octane fuels and vehicles. I look forward to today's serious discussion of this concept.