

**Statement of Senator Craig Thomas, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure**

**Hearing on Advanced Technology Vehicles: The Road Ahead
May 1, 2007**

Thank you all for being here. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

More than 100 years have passed since the first patent was issued for a gas motor engine and the gas fueled automobile. While technology has greatly altered the vehicles of the late 19th and early 20th Century, one thing hasn't changed: in overwhelming numbers, today's vehicles continue to be powered by gasoline.

It is unlikely that this trend will be any different in the near future. Americans have come to rely on the current transportation system, and the massive infrastructure that supports this system cannot be changed overnight. The costs are too great. The investment America has made in its existing system, and the resources that would be needed to replace it tomorrow, are staggering.

There is no question, however, that the transportation system of today will be substantially different when our grandchildren and great grandchildren are in charge. What it will look like is hard to imagine, but there is no question that the decisions we make right now will lay the foundation for the future. It is crucial that we get it right.

As we examine changes to our transportation system, it is important to keep the following objectives in mind. First, we must use technology to develop and produce safe, efficient, and reliable modes of transportation for our diverse nation. The system must meet the needs of the ranch family that live 30 miles from the nearest grocery store, as well as the urban dweller who only needs the use of an automobile once a month. Second, average Americans must be able to afford transportation in the future. Third, changes should result in a more friendly system on the environment. And finally, we must do no harm.

Frankly, I am concerned that we are rushing to pass laws without knowing the consequences of our actions. This is particularly the case with pending legislation that chooses the fuels to replace gasoline at the pump. Mark Jacobson, a Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor at Stanford University recently released a study that raises serious concerns about the impact high blend ethanol will have on the health of Americans. Professor Jacobson concluded that with expanded use of E85 ethanol, our nation will see an increase in ozone related asthma, hospitalizations and deaths. The research is so new, I don't know if Professor Jacobson is correct. But what if he got it right? Who will be held accountable for the damage done?

As we look to the future, it is important we remain headed in the right direction. The road ahead is certainly going to be filled with potholes. Avoiding those that cause significant harm is something we can all agree is a worthy goal.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.