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Representative Dave Gallik

House Agriculture Committee
February 10, 2005

Testimony of Michael Allen
Ethanol Producers And Consumers (EPAC)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the House Agriculture Committee, for the record my name is Michael Allen and I represent EPAC (Ethanol Producers And Consumers). EPAC is an international non-profit association with the specific goal and mission to promote and encourage the use and production of ethanol. We have members all across the United States and in a handful of foreign countries.

We are headquartered in Nashua Montana! Montana is important to EPAC. We make our home here by choice. We live and work in Montana because it is the best land in America.

When we travel across the country and provide educational workshops regarding ethanol, people are always impressed with our knowledge of the product. They love the fact that we come from a Western, rural, agriculture state. The fact that EPAC is a small (3 employees) grass routes organization is also important to our clients. They KNOW that the education that we provide is done cost effectively and with the love and desire of furthering the use of the ethanol product as our first and foremost goal.

These clients and supporters of EPAC are also very surprise when they find out that Montana does not have and ethanol plant. They are further surprised and shocked when they find out that less then 1% of all of the gasoline sold in the state has been blended with ethanol.

While EPAC has done a great job throughout the country marketing and promoting ethanol, our own home state falls way short when it comes to the production and use of ethanol.

We want to change that!

We need to have Montanan's educated about the facts, benefits and features of ethanol and how it can help across all economic and urban and rural areas of Montana.

This legislation before you today is a great start to begin that education process.

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Montana WILL have an ethanol bill pass this session. I don't know what that legislation will look like its final form, but I do know that some form of legislation will be approved. The current administration wants this legislation to happen. Rural Montana wants ethanol legislation to happen. Farm groups, Montana DEQ, republicans, democrats, environmental groups: They all want to have some type of ethanol legislation to pass.

Once we have an ethanol bill, what happens? Well, we need to let the citizen's of Montana know that their cars will be fine. That there is no difficulty in using this renewable fuel. The benefits and qualities of the product need to be let out into the market place so that there is an understanding of ethanol.

With any change comes questions and uncertainty. It is the obligation of State Government to answer those questions. To overcome those uncertainties. To inform the public as to why this change was made to their gasoline.

This legislation will get that word out to the people of Montana.

This legislation gets it's funding from the plants that make the product. Essentially, the ethanol producers are funding this educational process. That makes perfect sense! By taking some of their producer incentive and using those funds to get the good word of their product out into the market place, the producers are helping the State of Montana make this change as smoothly and easily as possible. It is a great example of an industry working with the State to educate its population regarding legislative changes.

The dollar amount is small. The producing plants are affected less then if they had their own line item budget for advertising and promotion. And this legislation allows for a better coordinated and joint effort of promotion. The Montana Department of Transportation already has the funds as a budget item set aside in preparation for a producing ethanol plant. This legislation does not change that budge item set aside. The funds by the DOT are still committed to ethanol production, just a small part of those funds will be diverted to promote and educate about the very product that the DOT by law is required to offer an incentive.

Now is the time. Ethanol IS going to happen. Let's make sure that the change over to ethanol blended fuels happens properly. That folks know what is happening and why. This body should make sure that the people of Montana are informed of the very positive change that is being made to the gasoline in their state.

I ask you to consider HB 489 favoritly and give it a DO PASS.

I thank you for your time and consideration and I am available for questions at anytime.