Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks At The Dow-GM Fuel Cell Announcement

Monday, February 09, 2004

Thank you Theo. Secretary Abraham, welcome back to the energy capital of America, the great State of Texas.

The focus of President Bush and the U.S. Department of Energy on the advancement of fuel cell technology is an important step toward making America more secure and energy independent. Along with Senator Janek, Representative Bonnen, and the people of Texas, I want to thank our friends associated with two great employers, Dow and General Motors, for employing thousands of our citizens, investing billions of dollars in the Texas economy and Texas workers, and taking a major step forward in developing innovative energy solutions that protect our environment.

Texas has long been known as the nation’s largest energy producer, but we are equally proud of our distinction as the nation’s leading energy innovator. While other parts of the country are embroiled in debates over the installation of wind turbines, Texas is taking the lead in harnessing the potential and power of wind energy. Because of the passage of Senate Bill 7 in 1999, Texas is now one of the most progressive states in the nation when it comes to the development of renewable energy solutions, and implementation of energy conservation measures. And now we are at the forefront of the development of fuel cell technology, a cleaner, greener source of energy that has the potential to transform how we power our homes, automobiles and places of work.

Today is about much more than an isolated innovation, it is about pushing the envelope of science and technology to revolutionize how we live as a society. Fuel cell technology has great promise to shift us away from a dependency on fossil fuels and help build a hydrogen-powered economy. That is the vision. And the purpose of this hydrogen fuel cell transaction is to test the viability of that vision.

Within a generation, America went from wondering about the potential of manned flight to mass producing airplanes that would transform human travel and win a world war. But it couldn't have happened without the vision and experimentation of innovators like Orville and Wilbur Wright. Who’s to say that, a generation from now, we won't be living in hydrogen-powered homes and driving hydrogen-powered vehicles because of the ideas being tested right here in Freeport? In fact, in the not too distant future, I look forward to getting behind the wheel of an American-made, GM-produced, hydrogen-powered car!

Today we throw the switch on one single fuel cell that will convert hydrogen to electricity. In due time we anticipate the installation of as many as 400 fuel cells at this site to generate 35 Megawatts of electricity, enough energy to
power 25,000 homes. But that may only be the beginning. As the world population continues to grow, and as our energy consumption continues to increase, we know we must develop new sources of energy that power our lives while protecting our environment.

Fuel cell technology has great potential, even if all the questions about it have yet to be answered. But we won't know the answers unless we dare to innovate, experiment and explore. All Texans should be grateful that Dow and General Motors are exploring the commercial viability of fuel cell technology. We hope it represents a giant advance in the way we power our lives. Thank you.