



May 7, 2008

The Honorable Bart Gordon
House Committee on Science and Technology
2320 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gordon:

At the recent Council on Undergraduate Research exhibition and reception on Capitol Hill, you spoke about a planned visit to Oak Ridge National Laboratory to unveil a new research initiative to address rising energy costs, global warming, and US energy independence. These three challenging questions require the attention of researchers from all academic disciplines, including agricultural, biological, environmental and social scientists.

As you continue to work with your colleagues in Congress to advance our nation's research and development enterprise, it is important to ensure that all research perspectives are represented in our national research portfolio. All forms of energy production and use have environmental, social, and economic consequences. Our nation would be well served to strive to identify, understand and mitigate the potential costs of new energy sources as they are developed. Biologists, including some at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, are already working to understand the ecosystem-level impacts of biofuel production.

Last year, the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers (AERC), a member organization of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, held a briefing for Congress that outlined what biologists have learned about ecosystem responses to bioenergy production. These early findings illustrate the importance of continuing ecological research, and offer immediate insights for natural resource managers and other policymakers.

Presentation slides from the AERC briefing are available online at <http://www.ecosystemresearch.org/annualmeetings.htm>. In addition, my office would be happy to help identify expert scientists to discuss the importance of including research funding for biological, ecological, and social science research in any concerted effort to develop new energy sources and practices.

Thank you for elevating the importance of scientific research in our public discourse. Your efforts on behalf of science and science education are appreciated.

Sincerely,

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