

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Environment Hearing on:
“The Future of Transportation Fuels and Vehicles”
March 7, 2018**

(As prepared for delivery)

Today we are exploring the emerging trends in motor vehicles and the fuels they use. Across several federal agencies and national labs and throughout the private sector, research is underway to make driving cleaner, safer, and more efficient. Regardless of whether this work is the result of government mandates or market forces, it is nonetheless going on and change is coming to the fuels and vehicles marketplace. The purpose of this hearing is to get a better sense of this change, and I welcome our witnesses who are a part of it.

Today, we will hear about the environmental objectives, efficiency objectives, national security objectives and other policy reasons behind the evolving fuels and vehicles marketplace. But as we have this discussion, let us not forget the one thing that matters most, and that is the interests of consumers.

The family car is the second most expensive purchase after a house, and the average price for a new vehicle has risen to more than \$36,000, up by nearly \$600 from just a year ago, according to Kelley Blue Book. Yes, that is the *average* price, and it is quite a burden for households as well as the millions of small business owners and farmers and ranchers who rely on vehicles to make a living. Naturally, the car buying public wants to see sticker prices go down rather than continue going up.

The same is true for fuels. The average household uses about a thousand gallons per year which makes fill-ups a very significant part of the family budget. Struggling families and businesses would like to see breakthroughs that bring down the cost of gasoline or alternative fuels.

It's important to recognize that if new fuels and vehicles don't deliver consumer benefits, then they likely won't deliver any environmental or other benefits either. An auto dealer once told this subcommittee that

even the most eco-friendly car won't do any good if it just sits in the showroom, and nobody I know has ever refuted that logic. Bottom line – the success of alternative fuels in the marketplace relies heavily upon their ability to bring down the cost per mile traveled, and the success of alternative vehicles relies on avoiding sticker shock.

The good news is that the breakthroughs in fuels and vehicles can be done in a way that benefits consumers while also achieving environmental and other objectives. As someone who owns and drives a hybrid on both coasts, I hope we can look forward to a future of cleaner, safer, more efficient, and yes cheaper personal transportation, and I welcome this discussion on how we can get there.