

April 5, 2011

Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

It is with a profound sense of sadness and regret that I am, with this letter, resigning my appointment to the Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technical Advisory Committee. From the earliest days of the Committee's formation when I sought appointment, through my service as both Vice Chairman and Chairman and my present active role in HTAC, I have believed that my time was well spent helping the United States stay in the forefront of developing hydrogen technologies that could revolutionize our nation's energy supply and consumption and improve our economic standing in the global economy. Recent actions by this Administration have convinced me that you not only do not share that vision, but you are actively working to remove hydrogen and fuel cells from consideration as a future energy option.

HTAC has worked diligently to try to give you a sense of perspective about the considerable progress that has been made in hydrogen and fuel cells since you came to office. This progress has become heavily oriented toward our foreign competitors, but also includes the work of an American automobile company that kept its hydrogen development going even as it faced bankruptcy. Losing this capability now after the investment of billions of public and private dollars will be not only bad energy policy, but a tragic failure to understand the future. The future is clear. Hydrogen and fuel cells will play an important role in global transportation and energy economies in the very near future. With our competitors entering the market by 2015, the United States will lose its leadership position, and with that loss, the economic advantages tied to new product development and creation of a supplier industry.

Physics does not stop at the border of the United States. All across the globe there is a growing recognition that the limitations of battery technology make hydrogen and fuel cells a viable option if one wishes to harness the efficiencies of vehicle electrification.

None of this reality seems to penetrate the Department of Energy's decision process. There was no mention of hydrogen and fuel cells in the President's recent energy address. Hydrogen and fuel cells do not even rate a mention in the Quadrennial Technology Review despite the fact that the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) speaks positively of hydrogen as a breakthrough motor fuel. And the only major alternative energy technology to receive a significant cut in the President's budget submission was hydrogen and fuel cells. What you have done in recent weeks confirms the judgment of Byron McCormick, one of our nation's preeminent authorities on fuel cell vehicles, when he resigned from HTAC several months ago.

I first began advocating for hydrogen and fuel cells almost 30 years ago when it was a pretty lonely crusade. I have watched the science and technology mature to the point that hydrogen and fuel cells are a near term option for an environmentally sound energy supply which has the advantage of being an

inexhaustible supply. And now on the brink of success, I am watching an Administration, unwilling to follow the science and unwilling to acknowledge technological progress, consign us to being followers rather than leaders. Evidence suggests that the decisions made regarding hydrogen and fuel cells were made with political considerations rather than scientific or economic ones. For an Administration that committed itself at the outset to “follow the science”, this is indeed disappointing and unsupportable. In developing its hydrogen policy, this Administration has failed to listen, has failed to learn and has failed to lead. I am no longer willing to be a part of fronting for those failures. Therefore, I do resign.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Walker