

Emily Skor
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Keynote Address

Good morning.

It is so wonderful to be with you *in person*.

Minneapolis is once again bustling with biofuel leaders of every stripe – swapping stories, sharing innovation, and celebrating the growing depth and diversity of our industry.

Welcome to the Twin Cities – *my home town* – we picked the right season to convene here, and I sincerely hope you enjoy the week.

Being here with you is certainly a welcome break from Washington.

After a year and a half of legislative battles, policymakers are already turning their attention to the fast-approaching midterm elections – and energy is center stage.

It was only a few months ago that easing COVID restrictions led to a sharp rise in travel and an uptick in fuel demand.

Then Russia invaded Ukraine, throwing energy *and agriculture* markets right back into turmoil.

Consumers were already facing historically high fuel prices prior to the invasion.

Add in the ban on Russian crude oil and instability in the global market, and gas prices unsurprisingly continued to soar to new heights.

These economic side effects [stemming from the conflict in Ukraine] were a rude awakening for those policymakers who had become complacent about U.S. energy security.

Leaders on the left and right were forced to agree that the U.S. economy is still painfully vulnerable to foreign influence.

So when U.S. officials initially focused on oil supplies, we injected E15 into the conversation.

Bioethanol was trading at least a dollar below unfinished gasoline, and E15 was the surest way to help more consumers tap into those savings.

As gas prices ticked up week after week, consumers were saving as much as 60 cents per gallon with E15.

Not only do biofuels help the family pocketbook, we offer a sustainable supply chain that starts and stops on U.S. soil.

That's the message we carried through to leaders in Washington.

At our side were key champions in Congress, fighting to ensure that outdated summer fuel restrictions wouldn't interrupt E15 sales.

In fact, Minnesota's own Amy Klobuchar joined her neighbor to the west, South Dakota Senator John Thune, in leading bipartisan calls for President Biden to curb costs at the pump and displace Russian oil imports with biofuels.

Those efforts were backed by champions like Secretary Tom Vilsack, Congresswoman Cindy Axne, and other tireless supporters, at every turn, promoting American biofuels as a key solution to the energy crisis.

The White House listened.

And earlier this spring, I was honored to join some of you at POET-Menlo in Iowa, where President Biden announced that his administration would issue an emergency waiver for the 2022 summer driving season, offering drivers uninterrupted access to lower-cost E15.

It was a major win for American drivers and our nation's energy security, promoting cleaner options at the pump and a stronger rural economy.

But as you know – we're not done.

EPA's emergency waiver only applies to this summer's driving season.

And Growth Energy is working hand in hand with our retail partners and our stakeholders to demand a permanent fix so drivers can continue to access lower-cost E15 year-round in the summers to come.

Of course, that doesn't mean individual states need to wait around for Washington to solve our energy challenges.

In fact, nine governors – [thank you Ohio] – have already formally requested that their states be allowed to establish a level playing field for E15 in the summertime.

While we don't want E15 to become solely a niche or regional fuel, these nine states do represent nearly 60 percent of current E15 retailers and 14 percent of total U.S. fuel demand.

Couple that with RFG markets, we've got 39% of the fuel market selling E15 year-round.

Once we get California – that's 49%.

We can grow with 49%, while we work toward our goal.

And states are doing even more to drive growth.

Last month, our industry secured a big win on E15 when Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed the 2022 Biofuel Access Bill, guaranteeing statewide consumer access to the blend by 2026.

This landmark legislation is a testament to the leadership of rural communities in building a clean energy future, and we look forward to replicating this victory across the Midwest.

That kind progress – *even in Iowa* – doesn't come easily.

Success was only possible thanks to the tireless efforts of our entire community – local plants, farmers, suppliers, customers, and advocacy organizations – who all joined hands to press their local officials.

And it's that same unified, collaborative approach that will secure victories in other key markets.

But to build on our momentum, we need to remind policymakers that we're more than just an affordable alternative to Russian oil.

Savings at the pump got us a summer of E15, but it's our role in a low-carbon future that will open markets in 2023 and beyond.

As President Biden said during his remarks at Menlo, "you simply can't get to net zero by 2050 without biofuels."

And even if the next election heralds a swing in political leadership in the House or Senate,

many of the most immediate and impactful decisions on our top priorities – the Renewable Fuel Standard, trade, infrastructure, and more – will remain firmly in the hands of an executive branch focused on the climate.

As we know, biofuels have always been and will continue to be a bipartisan clean energy solution.

Just like those on the left, our champions on the right are eager to connect with a growing share of voters who care about clean energy – so long as it's affordable, reliable, and made in America.

Oil disciples and EV evangelists have loyal followers, but where ideology confronts reality – biofuels emerge as the clear solution for clean and affordable liquid fuel, available right now for today's vehicles.

That's why we must continue to broadcast our innovation.

Think of the advancements we've made as an industry in the past decade.

We are at the leading edge of a bioeconomy offering transformative solutions to leaders around the world.

That's true for cars, and it's true for emissions-heavy industries that are more difficult to decarbonize.

For example, a Growth Energy member, ClearFlame Engine Technologies, is shaking up the freight industry with technology allowing diesel trucks to run purely on renewable fuels like bioethanol.

The same biofuel-led innovation is on display in the aviation sector.

With current technologies, farm-based feedstocks – like bioethanol and corn oil – are the only source of clean, renewable energy available in large enough volumes to meet projected demand for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

In fact, a group of Growth Energy members – including ADM and Marquis Energy – have already pledged to produce, by 2025, 20 percent of the Biden administration's three-billion-gallon SAF goal for this decade.

But production will need to ramp up quickly.

And for that – we need market eligibility and economic viability.

That's why our team is working harder than ever to ensure SAF incentives harness the full emissions-reduction potential of U.S. biofuels.

At the same time, we're pushing to ensure that America's biorefineries can capitalize on new federal incentives, including the proposed clean fuel production tax credit and an expanded 45Q carbon capture and sequestration tax credit – originally proposed in last year's Build Back Better legislation.

For years, our industry pioneered the capture of carbon, delivering the food-grade CO2 needed to make beverages, package meat, and safely refrigerate vaccines.

CO2 shortages during the pandemic put that leadership in the spotlight,

and we've been taking full advantage of the attention to educate policymakers – and voters – about all ways this industry is driving the expansion of a low-carbon bioeconomy.

In 2021 alone, our industry purchased nearly 30 billion dollars' worth of corn.

Those bushels aren't just a feedstock for bioethanol, they provide the renewable building blocks for an ever-growing array of value-added products, such as high-protein animal feed, renewable chemicals, and corn oil.

And with each passing year, we're bringing down the carbon intensity of those products with new efficiencies, better science, and ongoing investment.

With today's technology *this industry* can reach net-zero and even negative carbon emissions.

Every plant is calibrating and optimizing –

whether that is tapping into a proposed carbon pipeline, test wells for sequestration, or seeking renewable energy sources like solar and biomass to power their biorefineries.

Our commitment to continuous progress is even opening a new world of opportunity for climate-friendly agriculture.

Earlier this year, I participated in USDA's 98th Agricultural Outlook Forum,

where we discussed how demand for low-carbon feedstocks can unlock incentives for our farmers to voluntarily invest in sustainable practices and drive down carbon intensity.

We can help bring agriculture into our national climate strategy.

But to advance that leadership, we cannot let regulators undervalue the investments and improvements we're making, from kernel fiber bioethanol to regenerative farm practices.

Nor can we allow critics to discount the innovations that allow us to ramp up biofuel production year after year – all while reducing our environmental footprint.

We see it around every new biofuel victory.

Critics come out of the woodwork with misinformation designed to obscure the value of renewable fuels.

It was no different after this year's E15 emergency waiver announcement.

Opponents spouted the same bogus claims we've all heard before about emissions, land use, or even food prices. And just as in the past, we worked hard to correct the record.

And we will continue to correct and combat the misinformation at every turn.

Fortunately, the facts are on our side.

That's why we must stay vigilant and take every opportunity to showcase the environmental benefits of homegrown bioethanol –

benefits backed by researchers at Argonne, EPA, USDA, California Air Resources Board, and a host of other leaders in lifecycle modeling.

The latest science has bioethanol reaching a nearly 50 percent carbon advantage over gasoline, and that advantage continues to improve with industry innovation.

And the very latest research from UC Riverside shows that E15 delivers statistically significant reductions on carbon monoxide and harmful particulates when compared to E10 –

underscoring once again that *more* bioethanol is key to cleaner air.

This low-carbon fuel has been one of the largest generators of credits in low-carbon markets.

And it is essential that as discussions on these policies continue in California, Oregon, Washington, Canada, and elsewhere, we keep our seat at the table so that higher bioethanol blends remain the lynchpin of new climate strategies.

Make no mistake, *these* are the considerations that will determine the direction of U.S. energy policy, including a fast-approaching, never-done-before review of the RFS.

We cannot deliver – on emissions or rural jobs – without more low-carbon biofuels.

And it's vital EPA recognize that reality as they work on a new rule – “the SET” – that picks up where Congress left off and establishes multi-year requirements for 2023 and beyond.

Fortunately, we're heading into that fight from a position of strength, thanks to a major victory on the new Renewable Volume Obligations set by EPA earlier this month.

Granted, the requirements for 2020 and 2021 did not address the full suite of concerns raised by our champions.

But we took home the most important prize – strong 2022 volumes with a conventional biofuel blending requirement set at the full 15 billion gallons established in the RFS statute.

The agency also restored the first 250 million gallons that had been illegally waived in the 2016 RVOs,

and it halted all improper small refinery exemptions – a move that should finally provide a level of certainty to the entire fuel supply chain.

Taken together, these actions demonstrated EPA's commitment to getting the RFS back on track and underscored the critical role biofuels play – and will continue to play – in mitigating climate change and lowering prices at the pump.

Of course, the RFS only sets the floor for growth – not the ceiling.

That’s why our team will continue to mobilize our champions and fan out across Capitol Hill to fight for the policies we need to unleash the full potential of this industry.

High on that docket are the clean fuel and carbon capture tax credits that I mentioned earlier.

Also on the list are the infrastructure investments we need to ensure that higher blends are available in every U.S. market.

We helped insert those items into the White House’s original Build Back Better legislation.

And while that bill has stalled in Congress, it remains a key starting point for every subsequent round of negotiations.

No matter what happens in the next several months, energy will remain firmly at the top of Congress’s agenda.

And Growth Energy remains committed to ensuring that biofuels are recognized as a cost-effective solution that can make an immediate impact.

The same goes for negotiations in the international arena.

In China, Brazil, India, South Korea, and beyond, we’re working with U.S. diplomats to ensure that bioethanol is front and center in every conversation on global carbon reduction goals.

In the wake of war in Ukraine, U.S. policymakers aren’t the only ones looking to break old patterns of reliance on expensive fossil fuels.

But that doesn’t ease the pressure to also advance climate and decarbonization goals.

Only exports of U.S. bioethanol can deliver on both fronts – a message I’m looking forward to delivering on a trade mission to Japan with the U.S Grains Council next month.

And some recent, long-awaited moves by the administration should help position us for continued success on the international front,

with two recent and key nominations – Alexis Taylor as trade undersecretary at USDA and Doug McKalip as the agricultural ambassador for the U.S. Trade Representative.

Together, they will lead U.S. Government agricultural trade policy.

Both have decades of experience in agriculture, and a deep appreciation of the critical role biofuels play in the global economy and supply chain.

And whether it’s E20 in India or E10 in the UK or E3 in Japan – or E15 here at home, every new market offers another chance to introduce a new generation of drivers to bioethanol.

We already offer savings at the pump – and that is very attractive for many, many drivers.

But no matter what is happening in the boom-and-bust cycle of oil prices, our market research also shows that climate-conscious drivers are increasingly making decisions about their fuel purchases based on emissions.

For these drivers, biofuel like ethanol isn't yet top of mind.

We're able to give consumers exactly what they want, and shame on us if we don't capitalize on that opportunity to the fullest.

Seizing on these trends, Growth Energy launched a pilot campaign last spring – *just in two markets* – encouraging consumers looking to better the environment with simple changes ... to simply change fuel.

We saw with our campaign a sharp increase in awareness and consideration at the pump –

especially among a new generation of motorists who are motivated by the promise of cleaner, healthier air and who will change their fuel consumption to support these values.

All they need is a nudge – and unrestricted access to better fuel options.

So we continue to educate and advocate.

To get where we need to go as an industry, we need strong policy signals, and it's up to us to show the world what we already know – that when it comes to competing on carbon, we win.

We show it by asserting our climate bona fides – over and over – with sound science and accurate modeling to reflect your innovation.

We show it by demonstrating that biofuels and farmers cannot be sidelined – if we are, all of America suffers.

And thanks to the innovations underway by leaders in this room,

America's bioethanol industry is poised for success, delivering on a new wave of clean energy demand:

- on the ground and in the air,
- at home and abroad,
- in today's vehicles and tomorrow's.

Thank you and enjoy the workshop.

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