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Senate

A COMPILATION OF INFORMATION ON ETHANOL ETHERS

(Senate - July 27, 2000)

A Statement by Senator Robert J. Kerrey (D-NE)

[Pages: S7814 - S7816]

Mr. KERREY. Mr President, I would like to note the release of a recent publication that all members of Congress should read. This new publication was produced by the Clean Fuels Development Coalition and it includes a presentation of facts about ethanol-based ethers.

As we attempt to deal with the water contamination problems resulting from leaking underground storage tanks, much of the debate is focusing on methanol-based ethers, i.e. MTBE. While MTBE has played an important role in reducing ozone throughout the U.S., the problems of water contamination have lead many to advocate limiting or even banning this product. During this debate a few of our colleagues have expressed confusion about the technical characteristics of ethanol-based ethers, like ETBE. Some have assumed that ethanol-based ethers have characteristics identical to MTBE. As both the Senate and House examine this issue, it is important to be aware of the significant differences between the two products.

For example, ethanol is a renewable, biodegradable product. When converted into ether, ETBE has many favorable characteristics in terms of the way it reacts in soil, water, and air, when compared to MTBE. In the event ETBE escapes into the atmosphere or our water supplies, it can be cleaned up much more efficiently than MTBE. ETBE is far less persistent than MTBE and remediation technologies have shown to be very effective.

Understanding the attributes of ETBE is also important at a time when every citizen is painfully aware of our dependence on imported petroleum and the relationship of supply and price. It may be possible to use ETBE in volumes up to 22 percent in gasoline. This addition of a clean, domestic fuel could significantly impact our gasoline supply situation, particularly in our most heavily populated and polluted urban areas.

I have long been a supporter of ETBE and while there are a number of technical and market challenges remaining before this fuel reaches full commercialization, its promise is undeniable. The petroleum industry, environmental groups, ethanol producers, and the auto industry have long recognized the superior qualities of ETBE. For that promise to be realized we need to ensure that ETBE is not included in any ban or limitation of fuels that result from leaking underground storage tank problems. I commend the Clean Fuels Development Coalition for their continued support of this important fuel as well as my own state of Nebraska which has more than a decade of experience in ETBE development.

Mr. President, at this time I would ask unanimous consent that a copy of the Clean Fuels Development Coalition fact book on ETBE be entered into the **Congressional Record**.