

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Lugar Presents Energy Patriot to Founder of Central Indiana Ethanol

On Saturday, September 15, U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar presented the September 2007 Lugar Energy Patriot award to Jay Berry, the 27-year old founder of the Central Indiana Ethanol plant. Lugar was in Marion to give the keynote address at the official opening of the plant, which is on track to produce 49 to 50 million gallons of ethanol annually.

“Each month I recognize an outstanding Hoosier who has demonstrated leadership and initiative in taking concrete action to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. Today, I am pleased to recognize Jay Berry for his leadership,” said Lugar.

“Jay’s vision for ethanol is for it to contribute to Indiana’s economy, help protect the environment, and contribute to our national security. He tells me that six years ago, after September 11, 2001, he asked himself what he could do to make America more secure. He recognized the dire consequences of America’s dependence on oil, and he saw an answer growing in Indiana’s fields. As a fourth generation farmer, Jay started out knowing a lot about corn but little about ethanol. Jay committed his energy to building this plant, and today we see the stunning result of his determination.

“Jay’s work demonstrates that entrepreneurship and public service can go hand in hand. Even as we celebrate this ethanol facility today, Jay is already looking for the next steps in service of Indiana and our nation. He and his partners are working to bring E85 to the local community and to parts of the nation where it currently is not available, to improve on the chemistry of the fuel and how it is made, and to be a responsible steward of the environment.”

“As the forefather of the ethanol and biodiesel industry, I’m glad Senator Lugar has something in his home state that he can showcase,” said Berry.

The Energy Patriot award is part of an ongoing effort by Lugar to recognize professionals, scholars, students or businesses that demonstrate leadership and initiative in taking concrete action to reduce America’s dependence on foreign energy sources.

An editorial profile of Jay Berry and CIE is below and may be published in its entirety. Additional information is available at: <http://www.lugar.senate.gov/energy/links/patriot/>.

For more than a decade, Lugar has stressed the strategic importance of energy security and the economic and security risks of dependence on oil. His legislative efforts promote sustainable energy production and use, incentives for renewable fuels like cellulosic ethanol and E85, increased fuel economy in cars and clean coal. The Lugar Energy Initiative at <http://lugar.senate.gov/energy> highlights the repercussions of America's dangerous dependence on imported oil and provides information on energy legislation introduced by Lugar, commentary by outside experts and information on alternative and renewable energy sources.

Profile of a Patriot

Each month, Senator Lugar profiles a student, professional, scholar, or business that has demonstrated leadership and initiative in taking concrete action to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil.

As a fourth generation Hoosier farmer, Jay Berry knew a lot about corn, but until five years ago he knew little about ethanol. At 27 years old, Jay is the founder of Central Indiana Ethanol (CIE), whose mission is to add value to the local economy by producing renewable fuel and other products that are economically and environmentally friendly in order to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

After September 11, 2001, Jay asked himself what he could do to make America more secure. He recognized the dire consequences of America's dependence on oil, and he saw an answer growing in Indiana's fields.

"I kept asking why can't we make ethanol here? Why can't we do this in Indiana?"

"At the time, I was 22 years old when I started this project, and I was having a tough time getting people to buy into ethanol and renewable fuels at home in Indiana. The first two years of the project were spent educating people – getting them to know about the ethanol process, understanding that it could be done and educating them that ethanol is not bad for the environment. Because of hard work, we were able to bring in a lot of people to support this."

"The toughest person I had to sell on the idea was my father," said Jay, whose father, Steve Berry is CIE board chairman. "Working with family has been a great experience. My father has been able to do more with this than I ever imagined, I'm really proud of him."

With their hard work, the father and son team garnered support from the community, and within five months of founding CIE, Jay had permits for the plant. The plant broke ground in November 2005 and began actual ethanol production on July 17, 2007, on the 45-acre site in Marion, Indiana. The total investment has been \$69 million, and approximately 90% of its investors are from Indiana.

Jay also attributes CIE's success to general manager, Mitch Miller, and plant manager, Jason Jerke, whose institutional knowledge of ethanol plants and scientific background are helping diversify CIE and make its operations unique. Mitch came to CIE from Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company, where he was the plant manager for nine years. Jason has masters degrees in molecular biology and chemical engineering and came to CIE after working at the Department of Energy.

While the plant's nameplate capacity is rated at 40 million gallons of ethanol per year, after three months of production it is on track to produce 49 to 50 million gallons of ethanol annually. The plant is using anywhere from 43,000 to 47,000 bushels of corn a day, buying primarily from Indiana farmers in a 60-mile radius from the plant.

Not only is CIE selling its ethanol to companies that will blend it into gasoline, but it is also blending ethanol into E85 directly on site. CIE is already supplying many of the 92 E85 pumps in Indiana, and Jay's goal is to bring on an additional 100-200 pumps.

While the process of making ethanol is fairly standard, CIE's diversification is evidence of Jay's commitment to energy independence and efforts to minimize environmental impact. CIE is partnered with a CO2 company and collecting between 274 to 320 tons of carbon dioxide that is sold to local bottling factories including Coca-Cola and Pepsi. They collect methane gas to fire the plants boilers and are working on extracting corn oil from distiller's grain. The plant itself is operating on 26,000 to 27,000 BTUS, 20 percent lower than it was guaranteed, and Jay plans to start selling CO2 credits on the Chicago Climate Exchange.

Now that CIE is up and running, Jay has broadened his vision to the ethanol industry as a whole. "Ethanol is not the answer, but it is a stepping stone to getting there. We really want to continue to push the ball forward into looking at alternatives," said Jay.

To start, Jay founded a second company, Midwest Biofuels, which is harnessing the experience at CIE in plant management, operations, construction management, and engineering to work with other ethanol projects and manage additional plants.

Jay is also actively working with state legislators on a renewable fuels standards for Indiana and federal legislators on the energy bill and farm bill. He's busy educating retailers and blenders about the most cost-effective way to convert pumps to E85, and especially wants to help incentivize small businesses and family-owned gas stations to make the conversion.

In the midst of all of his projects, Jay remains committed at the core to educating American about the need for energy independence and the science and benefit of renewable fuels.

"We are setting up educational programs at elementary schools in the local area. We would like to start working with high schools in their agriculture and biology classes to teach them about alternative fuels. If we start in the second grade grade, by high school they will understand the process a lot better," said Jay.

"I always tell people this is like one of those dreams that suck you in. My passion is farming. I consider this my hobby, a challenge to see if we can do it. Now, everyday I think about ethanol, energy and our dependency on foreign oil," he said.

Senator Lugar agrees. That is why we congratulate Central Indiana Ethanol's Jay Berry on being our September 2007 Lugar Energy Patriot.

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