



Middle East Spotlight

A Green Agreement

In an era of booming populations, shrinking resources, environmental degradation and over-reliance on fossil fuels for energy, Israel is a world leader in developing alternative sources of energy. Israel's cutting-edge technologies promise to improve energy efficiency as well as reduce oil dependence, while making the industry more efficient and minimizing the environmental impact of human activities.

As the United States focuses on energy security issues, Congress and the administration have sought to expand cooperation with Israel to harness the Jewish state's expertise. In late 2007, Congress passed the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

The law establishes a grant program for joint ventures between American and Israeli business, government, academic and nonprofit entities aimed at developing alternative sources of energy. The two countries signed an implementation agreement in May 2008 to further U.S. and Israel cooperation on advanced renewable energy and technologies.

Activities authorized under the agreement include collaborative research and development of new and improved sources of alternative energy. The fiscal year 2009 Energy and Water House Appropriations Bill included \$2 million for the grant program and the corresponding Senate bill included \$5 million.

The impact of the agreement is already being felt as Israel plans to become the first country to begin mass deployment of electric cars. Better Place, a company that aims to reduce global dependency on oil through the creation of transportation infrastructure that supports electric vehicles, chose Israel to be the first market in which to deploy its model.

Further, an Israeli company has recently announced that it found a way to capitalize on the pressure that is created by the weight of cars on the road in order to produce electricity. The company's aim is to produce commercial quantities of electricity that would help power street lights, reducing costs and increasing efficiency.

The project was developed by scientists at Innowattech, a startup company partially owned by Israel's Technion Institute, and is soon to be piloted on a short section of road in northern Israel, in conjunction with Israel's Department of Public Works.

With Israeli scientists and engineers at the forefront of renewable energy research and development, enhanced cooperation between the U.S. and Israel could significantly benefit both countries.