

October 22, 2009

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) is helping to develop solar energy technology that is cheaper and better for the environment. Altmire has added a provision to the Solar Technology Roadmap Act (H.R. 3585) that directs the U.S. Department of Energy to award at least one of the research and development grants created by the legislation to an organic solar technology project. Organic solar technology is a developing field that could potentially be used to power cell phones, laptops, military equipment and other items. The Solar Technology Roadmap Act passed the House today by a vote of 310-106.

Western Pennsylvania is poised to play a leading role in the development of organic solar technology. Plextronics -- an alternative energy firm located in Pittsburgh, PA -- is a leading researcher of organic solar technology.

“It is vitally important for us to develop alternative sources of energy that can lower costs for consumers,” Altmire said. “The Solar Technology Roadmap Act will create a comprehensive roadmap that will give America a competitive advantage in developing solar energy technologies. I want to make sure that research into organic solar technology is part of this effort, because it has the potential to be cheaper and more environmentally friendly than what is currently available.”

Solar power is commonly generated using silicon solar technology, in which rigid and thick solar cells are placed on large glass plates used to capture sunlight. By contrast, organic solar technology turns solar cells into a high-tech ink that can be printed or sprayed onto surfaces in a manner that resembles an ink jet printer. Congressman Altmire’s provision directs the Department of Energy to award grant funding for a demonstration project on organic solar technology. It has been estimated that with additional research and refinement, organic solar technology could produce solar energy more cheaply than silicon solar technology.

The Solar Technology Roadmap Act will facilitate the development of America’s short, medium, and long-term solar-technology goals. It will also increase coordination among individuals from different sectors of the solar technology industry -- such as manufacturers and equipment suppliers, national laboratories, academic, and state and local governments -- to accelerate technological advancement and strengthen America’s leadership in this field.