

News

Dan Malloy visits Torrington's FuelCell manufacturing plant

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By JESSIE SAWYER

TORRINGTON — Gubernatorial candidate Dan Malloy visited the FuelCell manufacturing plant in Torrington on Tuesday to meet with FuelCell CEO R. Daniel Brdar and staff about how to make a governmental push for fuel cell energy and create jobs locally.

"By the government and the industry working together and setting policy to grow the domestic market and create jobs, it becomes the export base," Brdar said to Malloy. "While we're glad to see that happening, because it's created a lot of demand for us, this technology that we develop with U.S. taxpayer dollars is creating more job in Korea than it is here."

FuelCell has clients in South Korea, California and Connecticut. Malloy said that he appreciates that FuelCell's services are used on the west coast and internationally, he wishes that fuel cell energy played a more integral role in Connecticut.

"The most disturbing factor is that so much of the product is going to South Korea as opposed to being installed here in Connecticut and that our state government doesn't appear to be the role as full partner as it could to make sure that this technology is put into use in the United States with Connecticut being one of the places to lead," Malloy said.

FuelCell Energy was founded in 1969 in conjunction with the Energy Research Corporation for studies about eco-friendly energy technology. The company manufactures Ultra-Clean stationary fuel cell power plants in order to reduce congestion in the traditional electricity grid and provide an alternate power source.

Coal, wind and solar energy are other options, but coal emits carbon dioxide into the air, and wind flow and is inconsistent in Connecticut and the weather changes too often in New England to rely solely on the sun for power, said a company representative. Fuel cells electrochemically convert hydrogen into fuel without any combustion or air pollution and FuelCell maintains that this form of energy is the most efficient in terms of performance and low impact to the environment.

Brdar hopes that with the help of the government, FuelCell will lead the charge in alternative energy.

"We're now shipping these products around the world," Brdar said. In fact, we're largely an exporter of the products we're making and we hope to be on of the fastest-growing companies here in Connecticut."

Malloy also thought that a higher emphasis on fuel cell energy in Connecticut would create more jobs.

"That's the way that we would develop the technology in Connecticut. Keep it here, keep the manufacturing process here," Malloy said. "That's what would lead to job creation."

As the United States becomes more technologically advanced, the demand for energy is on the rise. Malloy hopes that the United States and Connecticut will continue to become more involved in providing renewable energy sources as alternatives to oil.

"On a global basis, we know that fossil fuels are endangering our environment. All of the countries, whether they're big fossil fuel users or smaller, are striving to come up with cleaner technology to improve energy. This is one of those technologies and it operates at a pretty good rate of return for product-in-product-out," Malloy said. "Connecticut's leading that, between this

company and United Technologies, we have a real corner on the market.”

Malloy was impressed with the FuelCell manufacturing branch’s innovative business ideals in advancing fuel cell energy in Connecticut.

“The facility itself is a knockout. Modern, efficient,” Malloy said after touring the FuelCell facility.

When Malloy was a mayor in Stamford, he advocated alternative energy sources. In 1995, West Hill High School had an electric boiler system, which he moved to replace with gas fuel. That was before advanced studies about fuel cells were underway. He said that converting to gas power alone helped the grid. Malloy would like to see the state government get more involved in promoting fuel cells.

“With the stroke of a pen, you could make renewable energy possible,” Malloy said.

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