Rep. Burgess hosts energy summit

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new zero-energy lab at the University of North Texas is scheduled to follow Saturday’s energy summit hosted by Congressman Michael Burgess./Photo courtesy UNT

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DENTON -- Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D. (TX-26) is bringing together local and state officials, industry experts and academics for an energy efficiency and conservation summit on Saturday at the University of North Texas in Denton.

The summit will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. at Discovery Park, 3940 N. Elm. The keynote speaker will be R. James Woolsey Jr., former director of Central Intelligence and head of the Central Intelligence Agency, speaking on "Energy Policy and U.S. Security."

According to a release from Rep. Burgess’ office, the summit aims to highlight steps North Texans can take to become more energy efficient while saving on their energy costs.

"We must all do our part to become more energy efficient and strive for an energy independent America," said Burgess in the release. "I invite you to join me as I bring together experts to discuss our country’s energy agenda, including the future of energy in America, ways Texas has lead the nation in many types of renewable energies, and how recent federal policies will impact Texas."

The summit will feature two panels. The first will focus on ways to save energy in design and construction of buildings and homes, and the second panel will discuss energy efficiency and conservation for mobility.

Each panel discussion will be followed by a question-and-answer session with the audience.
Dr. Yong Tao, chair of the Mechanical and Energy Engineering Department at UNT, will be among those taking part in the first panel discussion about energy efficiency as it pertains to buildings.

While the panel’s industry experts will share perspectives on their products and services, Tao said his contribution will be about energy research ongoing at the university and the challenges associated with integrating the many parts that comprise an energy efficient structure.

“What we emphasize at UNT is a whole-building, integration approach, not just the components,” Tao said. “We do quite a bit of research evaluating those components, and what happens if you put them in the building, and how much energy can be saved on an annual basis.”

Tao said there are differences between what works in the lab and what works in a practical scenario. By bringing together various parties involved, Saturday’s summit provides an opportunity for the experts to further define energy efficiency.

“This kind of information is needed by the public, investors, and utility companies,” Tao said. “Hopefully we will be able to sort it out and define the benchmark (for energy efficiency). This is very important.”

Tao said another goal of the summit will be to emphasize that energy efficiency is not a single-constituent interest.

“Energy efficiency is in everyone’s interest. It involves so many parties and there are many sides. Each of us has a piece in the puzzle and we need to work together to find the solutions,” he said.

Tao said the university is in a unique position to pull everyone together because often times academics have the benefit of standing apart from political or economic interests of the energy debate.

“Maybe industry and government labels are not always sufficient. But a university’s evaluation provides credibility and the benefit of collaboration,” Tao said. “Congressman Burgess is a visionary for trying to work to bring everyone together, to help reduce the confusion and misinformation. It’s not about being pro-this or pro-that, but the fundamental interests of the public.”

Some of Tao’s previous experience includes work on a solar house in Miami and a zero-energy home demonstration in Beijing during the 2008 Olympics. Currently, he’s involved in developing a zero-energy lab at UNT. The lab will have its groundbreaking ceremony on Saturday alongside the summit.

“UNT has the vision to invest in the zero energy lab, and there’s quite of bit of infrastructure in the research. We’re trying to do something to get people to work together,” Tao said.

Saturday’s summit also will feature a fair with booths and exhibitions providing energy related information and resources. Vendors and displays will include: Airtron, the American Lighting Association, Atmos, the Byron Nelson High School solar car project, the City of Denton/Denton Municipal Electric, CoServ, Dan Fette Builders, the Denton County Transportation Authority, Glean Power (solar/wind), Home Depot, Lowes, the North Central Texas Council of Governments Transportation Department, Nucon Steel, Oncor, Passion Lighting, Peterbilt, Solar Logic, the Texas State Energy Conservation Office, the City of Trophy Club, TXU, the UNT Department of
Engineering, the UNT Office of Sustainability, the UNT System Facilities, UTA TMAC, and Waste Management.

The booths and exhibits will open at 8:30 a.m. The panel discussions will take place following opening remarks from UNT Chancellor Lee Jackson at 9 a.m.

For more information, visit http://burgess.house.gov/EnergySummit.
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