



Dupont Summit 2014

..... Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy Issues

December 5, 2014 ♦ Historic Whittemore House, Washington, DC

The Policy Studies Organization

Speaker

Ryan Davison – *American Chemical Society*

" The Importance Of Affordable Helium To U.S. Scientists And Researchers "

Helium plays a significant role in a number of critical technologies— from the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines used to assess injuries and diagnose illness, to gas chromatographs, cryogenic and nanotech tools, LCD screens, fiber optics, and high-tech computer chips. The U.S. government first set up a national helium program in the 1920s, which included a sprawling underground Federal Helium Reserve stretching from Kansas to Texas. By the 1990s the program looked frivolous so Congress passed a bill requiring the Helium Reserve to sell off its helium in relatively short order and then shutter its doors once it recouped its costs. Fast-forward to last year and on October 7, 2013, the Federal Helium Reserve was scheduled to be closed, blocking 10 billion cubic feet of helium underground and immediately shutting off 35 percent of the world's helium supply to private industrial and scientific users.

Considering the crucial role helium plays in advancing U.S. research and technology, the scientific community unified over the need for the Reserve to remain open and expressed to lawmakers the importance of passing legislation to do so. With no small effort, the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013 passed Congress and was signed by the President on September 26, 2013, preventing a shock to the market by allowing the Federal Helium Reserve to continue operating.

Even with the Reserve remaining open reliable and affordable liquid helium procurement remains a challenge for the academic community. Although there are potentially thousands of academics purchasing liquid helium, individual users have little purchasing power and often face dramatic price fluctuations and obstacles to reliable delivery, especially during a shortage. In an effort to provide academic users increased reliability and affordability when purchasing liquid helium, the American Chemical Society (ACS) and the American Physical Society (APS) are working with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to create a pilot program aimed at improving liquid helium purchasing for academic researchers.



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Biography

Ryan Davison –*American Chemical Society*

Dr. Ryan Davison is currently the lead policy associate at the American Chemical Society where he advocates for legislation that supports the chemical sciences. Most of his time is spent on Capitol Hill meeting with lawmakers and their staff, attending Congressional hearings, and monitoring bills relevant to the ACS. Ryan possesses a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), allowing him to personally highlight the importance of science research to Congress, which is overwhelmingly dominated by individuals with backgrounds in business and law. Before joining the ACS Ryan served as a Biosecurity Analyst at the Federation of American Scientists, a Science Policy Fellow at the National Academy of Sciences, and an adjunct professor of Neuroscience at George Washington University.

