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# **Gov. Bush throws support behind ethanol initiative**

## **Gov. Jeb Bush tips his hat to renewable fuels with the launch of a hemispheric commission to promote ethanol.**

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Gov. Jeb Bush, in his last Miami appearance as governor, threw his weight behind a hemispheric project aimed at having drivers tank up on sugar or corn and not just petroleum.

Bush launched the Inter-American Commission on Ethanol along with Roberto Rodrigues, representing Brazilian agribusiness, and Luis Alberto Moreno, president of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Bush called the project a "win, win, win, win" since it would help nudge the United States from oil dependency, preserve the environment, create jobs and help boost partnerships with Latin America.

Rodrigues, former agriculture minister now heading up the agribusiness committee of the Federation of Industries of the State of Sao Paulo, went further in extolling the importance of promoting ethanol.

"We are here launching a new civilization today. In this traditional hotel, we are doing it for our grandchildren," Rodrigues told a group of Florida business and government representatives and a top agribusiness delegation from Brazil. The morning meeting took place at the Biltmore Hotel.

"I am prone to big thinking but not as big as changing civilization," Bush later joked. The governor, who leaves office Jan. 2, said the commission was his only post-gubernatorial commitment so far besides a family literacy program.

Ethanol -- which has become the rage as the country deals with oil addiction and experiments with hybrid cars -- is a biodegradable alcohol generally distilled from corn or sugar. Currently ethanol is blended into gasoline as 10 percent or 15 percent of each gallon.

The memorandum of understanding signed at the end of the ceremony by Bush, Rodrigues and Moreno is not a legally binding obligation but a pledge of cooperation and promotion of joint activities to boost the use of ethanol.

Brazil is the world's leader in ethanol production, and its vehicles can use either gasoline or the ethanol blend. The United States has a growing corn-based ethanol program, producing some 4.3 billion gallons last year, just a fraction of the 140 billion gallons of gasoline Americans consumed.

Bush has called for the United States to boost ethanol use to 15 billion gallons by 2015, about double the requirements set out in the 2005 Energy Policy Act.

Rodrigues, a Sao Paulo sugar grower, is enthusiastic about Brazilian ethanol, once telling journalists the country wanted to export "rivers of ethanol."

Bush and a team have been working on the idea of boosting ethanol since early this year. But the idea of inter-American cooperation has been evolving, especially since Brazil does not currently have large supplies to export.

Several months ago, backers were calling for elimination of a tariff on ethanol imports that is used to boost the fledgling U.S. industry. But Monday, Bush only made passing jokes about the tariff, which was just extended until 2009.

Instead, the leaders said the commission would fund feasibility studies, promote the use of Brazilian ethanol technology and target production opportunities in places like Central America.

Moreno pointed out the Inter-American Development Bank has been backing the development of biofuels "long before they were in fashion."

Jorge R. Piñon, of the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, said consumers were unlikely to get a price break from ethanol. But he said Florida had the infrastructure for importing ethanol from the Caribbean and Central America through state ports, while it would be a bonus industry for countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

"The promotion of that industry in the Caribbean [and Central America] will create jobs," said Piñon, a former oil industry executive.