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Rep. Dingell Disputes China's Electric-Car Policy

By MIKE RAMSEY

DETROIT—U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D., Mich.) on Wednesday sent a letter to China's ambassador to the U.S. urging the Chinese government to reconsider an effort to force auto makers to hand over proprietary electric vehicle technology as a condition to participate in the market.

"This violates the sanctity of the intellectual property laws we hold so dear in the United States and amounts, in my estimation, to a violation of China's obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization," Rep. Dingell said in the letter addressed to Ambassador Zhang Yesui.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that the Chinese government plans to launch an electric-car effort designed to make the country the world leader in the technology and as part of the effort it will require foreign car companies to share trade secrets with their Chinese partner companies. Foreign car companies already must have a Chinese partner to operate in the country.

Car makers would face a difficult dilemma under such a demand. China is the world's largest car market and is growing at a rapid pace. Refusing to hand over technology would mean ceding a major source of growth and profit. But giving partner companies the technology would mean the Chinese companies may not need their foreign counterparts much longer and the same technology could be used to compete against these companies outside of China.

"I urge China to reconsider these plans and instead commit to meaningful cooperation with the United States to remedy existing problems in our countries' trade relations," Rep. Dingell wrote.