

American Ingenuity TM

To Solve America's Energy Crisis, We Need Innovation, Not Regulation

by Rodney E. Slater

(NAPSA)—As America makes reducing our dependence on foreign oil and oil's harmful emissions a national imperative, the challenge we confront is: How do we improve America's energy security while meeting our country's growing energy demands?

Cars and CAFE

Domestic automakers are addressing these energy challenges and direct as much as \$17 billion a year toward alternative-energy research and development. In spite of this commitment, some still believe that the 1970s policy of regulated CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards alone is the best approach to reducing our gasoline consumption. However, a combination of reasonable CAFE increases and the development of alternative-fuel vehicles is the better approach.

The Future Of Fuel

Because of the initiative taken by our domestic automakers, we have a better choice in alternative-fuel technology. Ethanol, bio-fuels and renewable energy sources free from harmful emissions are the future.

History shows that simply mandating overly aggressive fuel economy standards does not work. When first passed more than three decades ago, CAFE regulations forced automakers to reduce consumer choice by focusing on cars and trucks that were smaller, less powerful, less safe and more expensive, proving that CAFE was, at best, limited in its effectiveness.



Developing alternative-fuel vehicles has to be an important part of reducing the nation's dependence on foreign oil.

During its fuel economy debate, the House of Representatives will have to make a decision that will have a lasting impact on our domestic auto industry and energy future. Several competing bills have been introduced, and members have a clear choice between fuel economy legislation that provides for a reasonable increase in CAFE standards with a strong emphasis on alternative fuel development, or legislation that focuses solely on CAFE standards, which will cripple an industry that is too important to the U.S. economy. Some 13 million auto and related industry jobs are at stake.

One House bill under consideration is similar to an already passed Senate bill introduced by Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), which would force automakers to divert scarce alternative-energy resources to retool engines that will still rely on

gasoline at the end of the day. However, the United Auto Workers union says the bill could cost 17,000 jobs.

A more balanced option is available with Hill-Terry legislation (H.R. 2927) and has strong bipartisan support. While still increasing CAFE standards, it does so at a reasonable rate determined by the Department of Transportation, adding just two years to the timeline for vehicle compliance. But those two years allow the U.S. auto industry to continue investing in critical alternative-fuel technology.

Looking Ahead, Not Back

The House can join the Senate in expanding regulations that promise limited value while placing even more strain on the backbone of the American economy. Or it can make a bold, balanced and better choice to support consumers, the environment and workers who are already building our clean energy future.

Simply put, as Congress tries to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil and to develop alternative-energy policies, undue reliance on CAFE standards would be a 20th century response to a 21st century problem. For additional information, visit the Web site at www.drivingamericasfuture.com.

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