

# Committee on Resources

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## Witness Statement

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**STATEMENT OF  
DANIEL F. BECKER  
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL WARMING AND ENERGY PROGRAM SIERRA CLUB**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING OIL IMPORTS  
April 12, 2000**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Daniel Becker and I am the Director of Sierra Club's Global Warming and Energy Program. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of Sierra Club's more than half million members nationwide on how we can improve our energy security and cut our oil dependency. In short we should not drill under the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil. We should drill under Detroit by making our cars go further on a gallon of gas.

Once more, oil prices have risen because OPEC-- a cartel of oil producing countries-- is manipulating supply to increase profits. Once more, we find ourselves vulnerable and victimized by our dependence on foreign oil. And once more, Americans, tired of being jerked around by the cartel, look to their leaders for real solutions.

But instead of using the last quarter-century to reduce America's oil dependency, Congress has bowed to the oil companies and auto industry -- refusing to encourage American car companies to make more fuel efficient cars and voting against research and incentives for alternate energy use. Since 1995, a rider on the Transportation Appropriations bill has frozen Corporate Average Fuel Economy.

Today's high prices at the pump are the result of high demand in the face of a small shortfall in world oil supply. Globally, oil consumption is 2 million barrels of oil per day more than supply because of OPEC's decision to cut back on production by 4 million barrels per day. The U.S. alone consumes about 18 million barrels a day. The U.S. share of this shortfall is about 400,000 barrels per day. If, in 1994, a 6% per year increase had been phased in, CAFE standards alone would have eliminated twice the U.S. share of excess demand according to analysis by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy.

Now some members of Congress are using the oil price hike as an excuse to renew their calls for drilling the Arctic Refuge. Clearly, destroying one of the most spectacular places on the planet is too high a price to pay for politics as usual.

America can break its dependency on OPEC. In the short-term, we should renew our ban on exporting Alaskan oil to lower prices at the pump for hard-working Americans. But the long-term solutions lie in reducing our dependency on oil by making a car go longer on a gallon of gasoline, using alternate energy sources and enacting real campaign finance reform to reduce the influence of the oil and auto industries over our nation's energy policies.

## **How did we get here?**

In 1975, Congress, with bipartisan support, passed the most successful energy savings measure it has ever adopted -- the provision, signed into law by President Gerald Ford, set miles per gallon standards for cars and light trucks. By requiring automakers to double the average fuel economy of cars between the late-1970s through the late-1980s, Congress ensured that the U.S. would be saving 3 million barrels of oil every day. Without these savings, the U.S. would be importing at least 1.5 million barrels a day more oil than we currently do.

Congress established the initial standards, and delegated responsibility for setting new standards to the Administration, specifically the Department of Transportation. Congress provided the Administration with four factors to consider in setting new standards: technical feasibility, economic practicability, the effect of other federal motor vehicle standards on fuel economy, and the need of the United States to conserve energy. With these directions, Congress recognized that the Department of Transportation (DOT), would be best equipped to provide the analysis necessary for a sound rule making at a low cost for the public value provided.

Today, demand for gasoline is at an all-time high and growing. In large part, this increase in demand is due to the transformation of light trucks into passenger vehicles. When Congress passed the CAFE law, it did not require automakers to steadily improve light truck fuel economy because these vehicles comprised only 20% of the vehicle fleet and were primarily work vehicles. Today, Sport Utility Vehicles and other light trucks are nearly 50% of the new vehicles sold, driving down average fuel economy and driving up demand for oil.

Since 1996, Congress has bowed to auto-industry pressure to block new fuel economy standards. By attaching riders to Department of Transportation funding bills since 1996, Congress has prevented the Administration from acting to reduce demand for oil by improving fuel economy standards for light trucks. Fuel economy for these vehicles has been stuck for 19 years despite their increasing percentage of the fleet.

## **Increasing Supply: A False Choice**

To some, the solution to ending our dependence on foreign oil is simple: increase domestic supply. While close to half our oil is produced domestically, the U.S. has less than 3% of the world's known oil reserves. The numbers will never add up to oil independence. And our oil deficit is only getting worse.

The U.S. currently imports 55% of its oil. At the height of the oil crisis in 1975, the U.S. imported just 35% of its oil. Within the next few years the U.S. Energy Information Agency projects that we will be importing nearly two-thirds of our oil.

## **Where does oil go?**

Oil meets 40% of our energy needs. The transportation sector is the leader in oil demand, with motor fuels accounting for 65% of oil consumption-- mostly in the form of gasoline. In fact, cars and light trucks alone guzzle 40% of the oil consumed in the U.S. Demand for gasoline has been steadily rising, in large part due to the boom in light truck sales, especially sport utility vehicles. Today, about half of all new vehicles sold in America are light trucks. Many of these are SUVs, which average 12-16 mpg.

The most noticed consequence of our oil dependence is the price of a gallon of gasoline at the pump. Prices

at the gas pump in March were more than 50% higher than last year's prices-- upwards of \$1.50 per gallon for regular unleaded gasoline. But the consequences of oil dependence go far beyond draining consumers pockets at the pump. Oil dollars account for \$50 billion of our national trade deficit. Oil has extensive environmental impacts that begin with drilling and continue through to burning it in our cars and light trucks. The military costs of protecting oil from the Persian Gulf include defending oil-producing nations as we did in the 1990 Gulf War. And the greatest long-term costs: Demand for oil creates a constant pressure to drill in our pristine wilderness areas, particularly the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and also off the coasts of California, Florida and other states.

### **The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

Consumers facing high prices at the pump want solutions. But the United States can never drill its way to energy independence. Though some say the answer to our nation's energy needs lie below the surface of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, this spectacular landscape need not-- and must not-- be sacrificed for a few barrels of oil. Ninety-five percent of Alaska's vast North Slope is already available for oil and gas exploration and leasing. The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge represents the last 5% that remains off-limits to drilling. But Big Oil wants it all.

The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is America's Serengeti. Nestled between the towering mountains of the Brooks Range and the Beaufort Sea in northeast Alaska, the narrow 1.5 million acre coastal plain is the biological heart of this untamed wilderness. It is home to unique and abundant wildlife: wolves, polar bear, musk ox and wolverine. Myriad bird species rely on the coastal plain for breeding, nesting and migratory stopovers on trips as far away as the Baja peninsula, the Chesapeake Bay, and even Antarctica.

The coastal plain is also the calving grounds of the 129,000 member Porcupine River Caribou Herd who migrate over 400 miles each year to this same place to give birth to their young. This migration is reminiscent of the buffalo that once roamed the Great Plains. The coastal plain is also sacred ground to the Gwich'in Indians, a 20,000 year old native culture whose subsistence lifestyle depends upon the harvest of caribou. Their villages are strategically located along the migration routes of the caribou herd, and they depend on the animal for food, clothing, medicine and their cultural lore. The Gwich'in people fear that the oil development in the calving grounds of the caribou will disrupt the herd, cause a decline in caribou population and ultimately jeopardize their traditional way of life. The wildlife and the native culture that depend upon the coastal plain are at risk because it is precisely this coastal plain that Big Oil wants to open to drilling and development, claiming that vast quantities of oil lie beneath the fragile tundra.

But truth be told, no one knows how much, if any, oil lies beneath the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. The United States Geological Service (USGS) has conducted multiple studies of potential oil reserves and the estimates have fluctuated dramatically. Even in its most favorable estimate, the USGS published a determination of the mean estimate of economically recoverable oil as 3.2 billion barrels of oil. That's less than a six-month supply at current consumption rates and even at peak production, arctic oil would represent only 2% of total U.S. daily demand. Plus, it would take 10 years before any oil began to flow.

But it doesn't matter how much or how little oil may lie underneath the coastal plain. Drilling the Arctic Refuge would be as shortsighted as damming the Grand Canyon for hydroelectric power or tapping Old Faithful for geothermal energy. It would be as foolhardy as burning the Mona Lisa to keep you warm. America is losing our remaining wildlands at an alarming rate. We must have the foresight to protect one of America's most spectacular natural treasures-- not sacrifice it for a minimal amount of oil.

Proponents of drilling argue that the impact of oil development on the arctic environment will be minimal. But one need only look to the history of environmental abuse at the Prudhoe Bay oil fields 60 miles to the west to question that assertion. Prudhoe Bay is a massive industrial complex sprawling 800 square miles across now-ruined tundra. Oil development of the coastal plain will require hundreds of miles of pipelines and roads, numerous drilling pads, production wells, waste pits, airstrips, and dorms.

Such a massive industrial facility will forever destroy the pristine wilderness of the Arctic Refuge and once it's gone, it's gone forever. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is public land, which belongs to all Americans and should be protected for future generations to enjoy, explore, and discover.

### **Using 21st Century Technology in American Cars and Trucks**

The technology exists today to improve fuel economy without impeding safety or causing inconvenience for motorists. However, the auto industry makes its largest profits from gas-guzzling SUVs and does not want to invest to improve their product.

Both Honda and Toyota are pressing ahead with hybrid gasoline-electric technology. Honda's Insight is on the market now and gets more than 60 mpg, and Toyota's 5-passenger Prius, expected in the market this summer, will get 50 mpg. Hybrid engines, combining gasoline and electric power will lead to improvements in fuel economy. These reasonably priced vehicles (\$18,000-20,000) offer astronomical improvements over current mileage. The Prius has a fuel economy of roughly 55-mpg and can go over 850 miles on a single tank of gasoline. And the Insight was recently praised with the first product endorsement award in Sierra Club history, the Award for Excellence in Environmental Engineering.

If Congress is serious about ending our dependence on foreign oil, it should make auto companies give consumers the choice to buy fuel-efficient vehicles. The Big Three automakers' response to date is three diesel prototypes with no commercial production, despite the American people's desire to end our oil dependence.

Updating fuel economy standards would not be a burden on the auto industry for two main reasons:

- 1) Change cannot happen overnight, it must be gradual and steady: A 60% improvement is achieved over the course of years. That's why the auto industry should increase fuel economy by an average of 6% a year for the next decade. This improvement is achievable with current technology.
- 2) Consumers will have more choices: The American people deserve more choices, not less. That's why CAFE standards are fleet averages. For every fuel-efficient Insight or Prius a company can still produce some gas-guzzling SUVs. But Americans need more options on the higher end of the spectrum to achieve this balance.

### **Benefits of Existing Fuel Economy Standards**

The existing standards save more than 3 million of barrels of oil per day and reduce U.S. dependence on imported oil. Without these savings, the U.S. would be importing at least 1.5 million barrels more every day than today's current levels.

CAFE standards also result in consumer savings at the gas pump. Because fuel economy for cars doubled between 1975 and the late 1980s, a new car purchaser saves an average of \$3,000 at the gas pump over the

lifetime of the car. Even at today's low fuel prices, CAFE delivers more than \$30 billion annually in consumer savings. Consumers can spend these dollars in their communities on food, housing, and clothing instead of on imported oil. Indeed, this program is a bargain for the American people; there can be no doubt that the very modest regulatory cost of the CAFE standard program is public money well spent.

CAFE standards cut pollution. These standards have reduced US greenhouse gas emissions by 140 million metric tonnes per year. By reducing oil consumption, they keep 500,000 tons per year of carcinogenic hydrocarbon emissions (a key smog-forming pollutant) from upstream sources -- refining and transporting of oil, and refueling at the pump -- out of the air we breathe. The standards, therefore, improve air quality, helping polluted cities and states achieve Clean Air Act requirements. They also keep millions of tons of carbon dioxide, the prime greenhouse gas, out of the atmosphere, helping to curb global warming.

Finally, the US can achieve higher fuel economy standards while creating jobs for Americans. A study by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy concluded that the money saved at the gas pump from a modest CAFE increase would be reinvested throughout the economy creating a net increase of 244,000 new jobs nationwide, with 47,000 of these in the auto industry. Raising fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks would build upon the significant benefits Americans have already received from the existing standards.

### **We can safely improve CAFÉ Standards**

It is also important to recognize that the rate of traffic fatalities decreased by 50 percent over the same time that fuel economy doubled under the existing standards. The auto industry has consistently opposed the CAFE law. In 1974, a Ford representative argued before Congress that CAFE would result in a "product line consisting of either all sub-Pinto-sized vehicles or some mix of vehicles ranging from a sub-sub-compact to perhaps a Maverick." This dire prediction proved to be untrue. The industry met CAFE requirements while providing consumers with a full range of cars and light trucks. In fact, when Congress passed the CAFE law, America had the industrialized world's least efficient fleet of vehicles. The CAFE law spurred development of technology and improved the competitiveness of our auto industry. Eighty-five percent of efficiency improvements came from technologies such as more efficient engines and transmissions, and better aerodynamics.

Light trucks pose safety dangers to their owners and occupants. SUVs are four times more likely to roll over in an accident. Rollovers account for 62% of SUV deaths, but only 22% in cars. Yet automakers continue to fight new standards protecting occupants in rollover accidents. According to a study by the National Crash Analysis Center, an organization funded by both the government and the auto industry, occupants of an SUV are just as likely as occupants of a car to die once the vehicle is involved in an accident. One explanation is that SUVs have high rollover rates.

Light trucks particularly heavy SUVs and pickups, are fundamentally incompatible with cars on the road. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, collisions between cars and light trucks account for more than half of all fatalities in crashes between light duty vehicles. Nearly 60% of all fatalities in light vehicle side impacts occur when the striking vehicle is a light truck. SUVs are nearly three times as likely to kill drivers of other vehicles during collisions than are cars. Finally, these vehicles pose excessive risk to pedestrians because of their design, weight and weaker brakes. Raising light truck CAFE standards would help restore balance and compatibility to the overall vehicle fleet, resulting in reductions in traffic fatalities and pollution

## **Freezing CAFE Standards: A Flawed Energy Policy**

Starting with the FY 1996 Department of Transportation Appropriations bill Congress barred the Department from exercising its expert judgment under the fuel economy law. The rider blocking fuel economy standards has precluded the Department from using funds to "prepare, propose, or promulgate" CAFE standards. In effect, this blocks the department from even considering technical feasibility of improving the standards, the economic practicality of doing so, the effect of other Federal motor vehicle standards on fuel economy, and the need of the nation to conserve oil.

The rider blocking the DOT from doing its work has frozen fuel economy standards for both cars and light trucks. Light truck fuel economy has been most affected because the freeze provision killed a light truck fuel economy rulemaking; it has allowed the large disparity between car and light truck fuel economy to persist. The CAFE rider has, in essence, substituted Congress's judgment on the "technical feasibility" of raising light truck standards as well as the effect of other federal motor vehicle safety standards on fuel economy for that of the experts it charged with undertaking this analysis. And, by stealth, the rider even denies the American people the benefit of DOT's analysis that it would do in preparation for proposing new standards.

Automakers are now taking advantage of the light truck fuel economy loophole to produce fleets of gas guzzling, heavily polluting sport utility vehicles (SUVs), minivans and pickups. The explosion of gas guzzling light trucks in the marketplace has brought the fleet fuel economy of new vehicles sold in 1999 to its lowest point since 1980, according to EPA's 1999 fuel economy trends report. Fuel economy of today's light trucks has stagnated for 19 years while the market share of these vehicles has jumped from 20% in the 1970s to nearly 50% of new vehicle sales today. These vehicles are driving up demand for oil to an all time high.

The rider blocking CAFE also blocks critical action addressing "the need to conserve energy." OPEC oil will continue to provide the nation with the majority of its oil until Congress acts to pursue an energy policy that directly address rising demand by the transportation sector. The decision Congress made in the 1970s was to enact a sound energy policy that included the CAFÉ program. This program now saves millions of barrels of oil every day and could save millions more. Instead of seeing improvement in the average fuel economy of new vehicles sold, we are backsliding. The average fuel economy of new vehicles sold in 1999 was at its lowest point since 1980. The standard for trucks has stagnated for 19 years and car standards have not changed in 14. This status quo does not reflect the real need of the nation to conserve energy - specifically oil.

And, the rider blocking CAFE also prevents critical DOT from addressing "the need to conserve energy" to reduce air and global warming pollution. Twenty percent of US carbon dioxide pollution comes from cars and light trucks; transportation is the fastest growing source of US greenhouse gas emissions. Gas-guzzling light trucks are driving up US emissions of global warming pollution; improving the standards would help reduce this pollution. Each gallon of gasoline burned in our cars and light trucks spews out nearly 30 pounds of carbon dioxide, the prime global warming pollutant. A 14-mile per gallon SUV will emit more than 115 tons of carbon dioxide over its lifetime, while the average new car emits 64 tons. New standards would also significantly reduce carcinogenic smog-forming hydrocarbon emissions from upstream sources (refining, transporting and refueling).

## **Raising Fuel Economy Standards Will Save Oil**

The single biggest step that the US can take to save oil and curb global warming is to make our cars and sport utilities go further on a gallon of gas by raising miles per gallon standards. In fact, improved standards will save more than we import from the Persian Gulf can expect to get from the Arctic and offshore California combined. The US could be saving an additional 3 million barrels of oil per day if updated fuel economy standards were phased in for both cars and light trucks. A six- percent increase in standards per year over a ten-year period would achieve these significant savings. One key step toward these larger oil savings is to close the loophole in the existing fuel economy program that allows light trucks to meet a significantly lower average standard than cars - 20.7 mpg rather than the 27.5 mpg standard that applies to cars. Closing this loophole would put the US on a course to save 1 million barrels of oil every day.

Automakers can use today's technology to achieve real oil savings. And, automakers can safely increase the fuel economy of cars and light trucks without significantly changing their size or performance. Research by both the Center for Auto Safety on cars and by the Union of Concerned Scientists on SUVs demonstrates that higher fuel economy standards can be achieved using existing technologies while also reducing occupant deaths and injuries without altering the vehicle mix. Cost-effective technologies such as improved engines and transmissions and new materials are the keys to achieving higher fuel economy in both cars and light trucks. These technologies will also help the American automotive industry face an increasingly competitive future.

### **Public Support for Raising CAFE Standards**

Polls consistently show that the American people support raising fuel economy standards. An August 1999 World Wildlife Fund poll of light truck owners showed that 73% believed light trucks should be cleaner and two-thirds would pay significantly more for their next truck if it polluted less. Significantly, 70% believed automakers would not clean up their trucks if they were not required to do so. Another August 1999 poll by Zogby International of predominately Independent and Republican voters in New Hampshire revealed that 75 percent favored increasing fuel economy to address global warming, even at a cost of \$300. A 1998, a Research/Strategy/Management, Inc. poll conducted for the Sustainable Energy Coalition showed that 97 percent of Americans favored use of new technologies that would improve fuel economy. And the 1998 Scripps Howard Texas Poll revealed that Americans are very supportive of measures that will reduce our dependence on oil. Sixty-four percent of Texans agreed with the following statement: "We should reduce our dependence on coal and oil energy sources in order to decrease the impacts of global warming even if that means we will pay more for cleaner, renewable energy sources."

### **Investing in Renewable Energy**

While many congressional leaders are now calling for immediate action to reduce gasoline prices, they have blocked efforts to increase energy efficiency and reduce oil consumption. In the last two years, Congress has significantly under-funded the Administration's proposals to:

- \* Fund research for energy conservation, solar and renewable energy, by 20% less than requested in FY 2000, or \$273 million for FY '99 and 2000;

- \* Provide tax incentives to spur: the purchase of energy efficient vehicles and other products, the use of renewable energy, and clean renewable electricity production, by 98% less than requested in FY 2000, and by 100% less than in FY '99, when Congress provided no funding. Those decreases represent \$7.1 billion for the two years, and;

Last year Sen. Jim Jeffords (R-VT) led efforts to add \$62 million to solar and renewable energy programs, but it was defeated. In the last two years, Congress cut \$7.4 billion from the Administration's efforts to reduce our consumption of energy. These programs would have saved business and consumers \$70 on their energy bill for every \$1 invested in these programs, which might have mitigated the cost of rising gasoline prices.

## **Weatherization**

When the Northeast was hit with a cold snap in February, the high cost of home heating oil was a major issue. Congress, since 1995, has slashed funding for important programs that would help reduce oil consumption and improve energy efficiency. In Fiscal Year 1996, the energy efficiency budget was cut by 30%. Energy efficiency helps to reduce demand and save consumers money.

In addition to cutting funding for energy efficiency programs in general, Congress has slashed funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program, a program that provides essential services to low-income families. The program provides up to \$2,000 per household to weatherize homes-- improving insulation, windows, furnaces, etc. Weatherization has been shown to improve a home's efficiency by 23%, which would decrease demand for oil and save money in the long-term. Low-income families were the hardest hit by high oil prices in a cold snap. By slashing funding for the weatherization program Congress ensured that homes were less efficient and required more oil to provide much needed warmth. Congress must invest in programs like weatherization to insure that the most vulnerable members of society are not left in the cold in the future.

## **Raising CAFE: A Win Win Solution**

If there's one thing that all sides can agree on, it's that this issue won't go away by itself. We are far more oil-dependent today than 25 years ago. And unless we demand change, we will continue to be vulnerable to manipulation by oil producing nations.

## **Raising Light Truck Fuel Economy**

Prior to the FY 1996 Transportation Appropriations bill rider, the Administration had initiated a rulemaking to increase light truck CAFE standards. The idea behind the 1998-2006 Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was to give plenty of time to Detroit's engineers, designers and salespeople to prepare for and meet improved standards so that all Americans could benefit from energy efficiency technologies. In the years leading up to the proposed rule, the Administration had increased light truck fuel economy under the 1975 law by a mere two tenths of a mile, bringing the standard up from 20.5 mpg to the current 20.7 mpg. As these figures show, the Administration had not rushed out to raise light truck CAFE by large amounts.

But, the law provides for a thorough and well-considered rulemaking process guided by the factors Congress included in the 1975 law.

Today, light trucks are more than half of new passenger vehicles sold. The distinction between cars and light trucks created in the original law is no longer reasonable. Twenty years ago light trucks comprised less than 20% of the vehicle market and were primarily agricultural and commercial vehicles. Today, light trucks, which include sport utility vehicles (SUVs), minivans, and pickups, are used as family cars for grocery shopping, commuting, and driving the kids to soccer games on the weekends. On December 21, 1999 President Clinton announced new Tier 2 standards to reduce smog-forming pollution from



automobiles. Significantly, the Tier 2 standards recognize that all passenger vehicles should in the same program, closing the loophole that held light trucks to looser standards than cars. Yet, when it comes to fuel economy, these gas-guzzlers are driving up demand for oil, increasing emissions of air and global warming pollution, and compromising traffic safety because a loophole still exists.

Many of the same technologies used to make cars use less gas can be used to improve light truck fuel economy. The Union of Concerned Scientists has shown that the best selling Ford Explorer SUV could travel as much as 34 mpg instead of merely 19 by using technologies that exist or are on the verge of marketability. The cost of the technology is made back by the consumer in about two years from oil savings. Automakers have been very slow to bring new technologies to the market because the existing standards do not demand it. In recent years GM put new transmissions on large pickups boosting fuel economy by 20%, but GM and its Big 3 rivals are still failing to meet the 20.7 mpg light truck CAFE standard.

Putting the light truck rulemaking back on track will not only result in significant oil savings, but will slash carbon dioxide emissions by as much as 240 million tons per year when fully implemented. A light truck fuel economy of 27.5 mpg can be achieved without compromising light truck safety; it will also help decrease the deadly threat these vehicles pose to cars on the road. This degree of increased efficiency can be achieved through a combination of engine and transmission improvements along with high-strength lightweight materials and better streamlining. Raising light truck fuel economy is an important starting point to put the US on the road toward achieving improved energy efficiency for all automobiles at reasonable, technologically achievable, and safe levels that satisfy the criteria provided in the law.

## Conclusion

All Americans benefit from the existing CAFE standards. And, we would all benefit from the greater oil savings, reduced pollution, and improved safety that would result from new standards. By prohibiting the DOT from spending funds on preparing, proposing, or promulgating new fuel economy standards, Congress is denying the American people the benefit of the expert judgment of the agency Congress charged with making these important decisions.

Congress charged the Department with considering the need of the nation to conserve energy, the technical feasibility of achieving new standards, and cost-effectiveness of new standards. Congress should allow the agency best equipped to evaluate this technical information to make a well-reasoned and supportable decision on the record. Ultimately, Congress can weigh in and act upon any action the agency takes. But, it should do so openly, with hearings, and with the benefits of the Department of Transportation's expert judgment concerning all of the information on what can be done to improve traffic safety, conserve energy, reduce pollution, and save Americans money at the gas pump.

Drilling the Arctic is not the solution. At our current level of consumption, there is no chance domestic production can equal demand. That's why we need a responsible Congress that isn't in the pocket of Big Oil to enact real solutions. We have the technology and national will to finally end our dependence on foreign oil. We need a Congress with the courage to fight now for working families and to protect America's environment.

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