



## The Fight Over Fuel Efficiency for 2007's Energy Bill

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on November 20, 2007 - 11:00am

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*This is a guest post by [Lorna Li](#), a dedicated a Green activist, rainforest crusader, social innovator, and technology enthusiast.*

Recently, a large group of auto workers and dealers have broken from the industry in order to support the [35 mpg by 2020](#) fuel efficiency standard that is currently being debated by Congress. This is the latest high-profile group that has joined the ranks of a broad coalition of environmental organizations, student groups, musicians, and trade associations that have been lobbying Congress to pass a strong, clean [2007 Energy Bill](#).

Fuel efficiency has been one of the more contentious items on the legislative agenda this year, with the House and the Senate deeply divided over the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standard, a proposal that calls for auto manufacturers to increase fuel efficiency to 35 mpg for cars, SUVs, and light trucks.

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The CAFE standard was, in fact, passed by the U.S. Senate in June. This is the first Congressional increase in fuel efficiency in 30 years. However, an alliance of the Big Three Auto Makers - General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler - are aggressively lobbying Congress to lower that standard to 32 mpg by 2022, stating that the higher standard is not achievable and could have deadly consequences.

The auto industry has argued for years that fuel-efficiency would compromise public safety due to the need to build smaller, lighter vehicles. However, according to Scientific American's October 2007 article [Saving Gas and Saving Lives](#), new engine and transmission technologies could enable manufacturers to improve fuel efficiency without significantly cutting vehicle weights.

The concern for passenger safety may be a thinly-veiled concern for maximum shareholder equity and short-term profits. Reminding us that the auto industry has, in the past, balked at implementing seat belts, airbags, and anti-lock brakes, Adam Lee, third generation auto dealer, makes this personal plea in his 3-minute video clip.

"My family has been selling American made cars since 1936. My livelihood and the livelihood of over 350 employees who work for us depend upon the success of the automobile industry. Today that strength is severely compromised by the lack of fuel-efficient cars and trucks customers want to buy. ...

Without a 35 mile-per-gallon mandate, I'm afraid, global warming and our dependence on foreign oil will continue to get much worse in the long run. And, in the short run, I'm afraid I'll be stuck

with a lot full of cars that no one wants to buy or even worse: This country will no longer have an American auto industry."

### **35 mpg by 2020 versus 32 mpg by 2022**

For a casual observer, 35 mpg by 2020 versus 32 mpg by 2022 doesn't seem like a big deal at all, until you do the math.

In their report titled [Energy Bill Must Guarantee Real Oil Savings](#), the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#) calculated the difference between the 2 fuel efficiency proposals:

Barrels of Oil Saved Per Day:

- 500,000 Auto Lobby Proposal
- 1.2 Million Senate CAFE Compromise

Consumer Savings at the Pump:

- \$11 Billion Auto Lobby Proposal
- \$25 Billion Senate CAFE Compromise

Emissions Reductions

- 85mmt CO2 Auto Lobby Proposal
- 206 mmt CO2 Senate CAFE Compromise

The 35mpgby2020 group states [various reasons](#) why the higher fuel efficiency proposal must be included in the 2007 Energy Bill. They say:

- A 35mpgby2020 fuel economy boost would create 241,000 jobs in the U.S., including 23,900 in the auto industry in 2020.
- Without fuel efficiency gains, Detroit stands to lose \$3.6 billion if gas prices stay high.
- According to UMTRI research, raising fuel economy fleet wide to 35mpgby2020 would boost domestic automakers' profits by \$12 billion through 2018.
- The National Academy of Sciences says our automakers already have the technology to get their cars and light trucks to average 35mpgby2020 without sacrificing vehicle size, safety or horsepower.
- An increase in fuel economy standards would save American 1.2 million barrels a day which is more than we currently import from Iraq.

### **Fuel Efficiency and Renewable Energy Must Go Hand in Hand**

Gas prices keep going up and up. Fuel efficiency and more renewable energy are the safest alternatives available that can help the United States break free from the vicious cycle of oil supply and demand. Another "Green" provision at stake in the 2007 Energy Bill debate is the Renewable Electricity Standard, which calls for 15% of U.S. electricity to be derived from renewable sources.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists analysis of [Renewable Electricity Standards](#), the RES provision stands to invigorate the alternative energy sector and create new, well-paid jobs in wind and solar manufacturing.

A 15% shift towards renewable sources will generate thousands of megawatts of clean electricity,

which will displace reduce the consumption of natural gas, lower costs for consumers on their home heating bills and benefit industrial users, as well.

Furthermore, RES is also currently attainable - two dozen states that have already put their own Renewable Electricity Standards into place. In fact, many states have moved to establish standards of 30 percent or more—demonstrating that the 15 percent plan proposed in this bill is an achievable compromise that all states can meet.

As oil prices continue to skyrocket, fuel efficiency and renewable energy are the 2 cleanest solutions to America's rising energy needs, that stand to free us from dependence on foreign oil, and the vicious cycle of oil supply and demand.

### **What you can do to support a strong, clean 2007 Energy Bill**

1) Support auto industry workers by sending this letter to Congress in support of [35 mpg by 2020](#).

2) Support a strong, clean Energy Bill that includes both the 35 mpg CAFE standard and 15% Renewable Electricity Standard by signing this petition for a strong, clean [2007 Energy Bill](#).

*Lorna also founded [Mariri Magazine - a journal about the rainforest](#), and writes about online marketing for environmental and social activism on [Green 2.0 Marketing](#). She also covers Web 2.0 startups, events and new technology on [bub.blicio.us](#). Lorna currently supports a coalition of environmental organizations that is lobbying Congress to pass a [2007 Energy Bill](#) that effectively addresses global warming and energy security.*



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