



The Nation Needs Stronger Fuel Economy Standards

Oppose Stevens Substitute!

Amendment Would Rob Consumers of the Fuel Economy the Nation Needs

A group of senators including Sen. Stevens is unveiling today a “compromise” substitute amendment on fuel economy which some claim will address the deficiencies of the fuel economy section. In actuality, the Stevens amendment is an unacceptable substitute that would take the existing bill language — which is too weak in some places, and too *harmful* in others — and make it even more harmful to the public. That amendment would *not* cure the deficiencies of the CAFE section. Instead, it would add new problems of its own.

Oppose the Elimination of Aggressivity Standard

The base bill would require DOT to develop a standard addressing compatibility and aggressivity. ***Compatibility*** describes how well two vehicles match in a crash; ***aggressivity*** describes characteristics like unnecessary grille bars and bull bars, which do not protect the occupants of vehicles that have them but are fatal to occupants of all other vehicles in a crash. This language was an enormously positive feature of the base bill that is not present in the Pryor/Levin substitute.

The Stevens amendment would strip all references to aggressivity from this language. Improving compatibility alone can be achieved by design changes such as lowering bumper heights and using lightweight advanced materials — without addressing characteristics that still leave the vehicle fatally aggressive in a collision with other vehicles. Improving aggressivity requires automakers to design vehicles with the risk to other people on the road in mind. Omitting this language is a serious setback.

Oppose Mandatory Attribute-Based Sliding Scale Standards

The current law sets fuel economy standards in terms of a corporate average. The corporate average is a boon to consumers: it means that automakers can continue to produce huge gas guzzlers, but they must give consumers highly fuel efficient options in order to balance out and achieve their corporate average.

Both the base bill and the Pryor/Levin amendment would empower DOT to replace the fair, across-the-board corporate average with a complex attribute-based sliding scale. A sliding-scale scheme incentivizes manufacturers to up-size vehicles to qualify for less stringent standards. This incentive jeopardizes safety, as upsizing may lead to more aggressive vehicles. It also presents the risk that oil savings from increased CAFE standards will erode or even evaporate. *Manufacturers under the sliding scale system essentially set their own standards by adjusting their product plans and fleet mix.* The Pryor/Levin amendment, notably, does guard against these perverse incentives by requiring attribute-based standards to produce the same oil savings as would be achieved under a corporate average, and it builds in additional incentives to ensure that the sliding scale would not result in more fuel efficient vehicles being produced overseas instead of domestically.

Allowing DOT to set attribute-based sliding scale standards is a bad idea, but the Stevens amendment takes that bad idea and makes it worse by *requiring* DOT to do away with corporate average standards. It also lacks even the controls that the Pryor/Levin amendment would place on attribute-based standards.

The Stevens substitute is not an improvement on either the base bill or the Pryor/Levin/Bond amendment. Public Citizen urges you to vote NO on the Stevens substitute.