

Environmental Defense • National Environmental Trust • MoveOn.org
Natural Resources Defense Council • Physicians for Social Responsibility • Public Citizen
U.S. Public Interest Research Group • Union of Concerned Scientists • World Wildlife Fund

BE A CHAMPION OF SAFETY, CONSUMERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
VOTE FOR MEANINGFUL FUEL ECONOMY AMENDMENTS TO S.14, THE SENATE ENERGY BILL

July 25, 2003

Dear Senator:

S. 14 threatens the environment and consumers by entrenching our dependence on polluting sources of energy. From opening up our coasts and special places to oil exploration and development, to removing key consumer protections in electricity markets, to funneling billions of dollars to polluting industries, this bill fails on all counts. **We urge you to oppose this irresponsible and environmentally destructive legislation.**

In particular, S. 14 currently contains provisions related to automobile fuel economy that will ensure our increasing dependence on foreign oil, ensure that consumers will continue to pay more at the pump and ensure increasing levels of global warming pollution. Specifically, S.14 weakens current law in two important ways:

- **Additional hurdles** – S.14 adds redundant decision criteria that the Department of Transportation (DOT) must consider before updating fuel economy standards. This language can only serve to frustrate efforts to raise standards by creating new opportunities for litigation.
- **Unjustified CAFE credits** – S.14 extends a failed program intended to encourage the use of alternative fuels. This program credits automakers with phantom oil savings based on the assumption that dual-fuel vehicles run on ethanol 50 percent of the time. In fact, a DOT study shows that these vehicles run on ethanol only 1% of the time.

We urge you to support any amendments to strike these harmful provisions.

The Senate recently passed – 99-1 - an amendment that requires the President to take steps to save 1 million barrels a day of oil by 2013. Now the Senate has the opportunity to provide the President with one of the most important tools for meeting this requirement. We urge you to support the following amendments that not only reduce our dependence on foreign oil but also curb global warming and save consumers money.

- **Feinstein/Snowe Amendment** – requires passenger cars and trucks up to 10,000 pounds to meet the same fuel economy of 27.5 mpg by 2011.
- **Durbin Amendment** - increases fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles to 40 mpg, and for pickup trucks to 27.5 mpg, by 2015. It includes heavier vehicles – up to 10,000 pounds - in both of these categories.

OPPOSE BOND-LEVIN AMENDMENT

Finally, we urge you to oppose any efforts to make the damaging language in the bill even worse. Senators Bond and Levin have proposed an amendment similar to last year's Bond-Levin CAFE amendment. The sponsors claim that their amendment will increase fuel economy. However, a look at the amendment shows it would do no such thing. Instead, the Levin-Bond provisions will add new criteria for DOT to consider when establishing fuel economy standards. These criteria are redundant to those already in place under current law *and* pile on top of the new criteria currently in S.14. These criteria will increase oil consumption and decrease safety by hampering DOT's ability to pass meaningful fuel economy standards.

A responsible energy bill would reduce our dependence on foreign oil, save consumers money, make our roads safer, and reduce global warming pollution by improving fuel economy. Currently S.14 accomplishes none of these goals. We urge you to oppose this legislation; oppose amendments to further weaken fuel economy standards; and support amendments that truly address the national security, consumer and environment challenges posed by the transportation sector.

Sincerely,

Katherine Morrison
Staff Attorney
U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Mark Wenzler
Director of Energy Programs
National Environmental Trust

Alicia Johnson
Program Coordinator, Environment & Health
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Alden Meyer
Director of Government Relations
Union of Concerned Scientists

Alyssondra Campaigne
Legislative Director
Natural Resources Defense Council

Randall D. Snodgrass
Director, Government Relations
World Wildlife Fund

Joan Claybrook
President
Public Citizen

Peter Schurman
Executive Director
MoveOn.org

Elizabeth Thompson
Legislative Director
Environmental Defense