



Senators Feinstein and Snowe Seek Increase in Fuel Efficiency Standards
- Bill would close the 'SUV Loophole' by 2011-
April 21, 2005

Washington, DC – On the eve of Earth Day, U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) today introduced legislation that would equalize fuel efficiency standards for Sport Utility Vehicles and all other light duty trucks with that of passenger cars.

The bill is cosponsored by Senators Jon Corzine (D-NJ), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Richard Durbin (D-IL), James Jeffords (I-VT), and Charles Schumer (D-NY).

"This bill would close the 'SUV Loophole' and require that SUVs meet the same fuel efficiency standards as passenger cars by 2011," Senator Feinstein said. **"Simply put, this is the single most important step the United States can take to limit dependence on foreign oil and better protect our environment. The overall fuel economy of our nation's fleet is the lowest it has been in two decades - largely because fuel economy standards for SUVs and light trucks are so much lower than they are for other passenger vehicles. This bill would change that - and would save a million barrels of oil a day."**

"When it comes to the fuel economy of America's SUV's, surely we can do better – for our planet, for our pocketbooks, and for our promise for the future," said Senator Snowe. **"Even China's new regulations are more stringent than United States' CAFE standards. This bill is a critical first step to providing real relief from skyrocketing gas prices that have reached over \$2 a gallon in most parts of the country, and will ultimately decrease our need for foreign oil. What is clear, the day before Earth Day, is that the federal government must lead in ensuring consumers a choice of vehicles with higher fuel economy, an appropriate degree of safety, and a minimal impact on our environment. Closing the SUV loophole will help us meet these goals – and I think it's an idea whose time has long since arrived."**

In December 2002, the Bush Administration announced an initiative to increase corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards to 22.2 miles per gallon by 2007 - a modest increase of 1.5 gallons over three years. The legislation introduced today would pick up where the Administration leaves off and gradually increase the fuel efficiency standards for SUVs and light duty trucks over the next six years.

- By model year 2008, SUVs and light duty vehicles would have to average 23.5 mpg;
- By model year 2009, SUVs and light duty vehicles would have to average 24.8 mpg;
- By model year 2010, SUVs and light duty vehicles would have to average 26.1 mpg;
- By model year 2011, SUVs and light duty vehicles would have to average 27.5 mpg.

The legislation would also require that the average fuel economy of the new vehicles purchased by the federal government be increased by 3 miles per gallon by 2008 and 6 miles per gallon by 2011. In addition, the bill would also increase the weight range within which vehicles are bound by CAFE standards, making it harder for automotive manufacturers to build SUVs too big to be regulated by CAFE standards.

The legislation would:

- Save the U.S. 1 million barrels of oil a day;
- Reduce our dependence on foreign oil imports by 10 percent;
- Prevent about 240 million tons of carbon dioxide -- the top greenhouse gas and biggest single cause of global warming -- from entering the atmosphere each year; and
- Save SUV and light duty truck owners hundreds of dollars each year in gasoline costs.

CAFE standards were first established in 1975. At that time, light trucks made up only a small percentage of the vehicles on the road and were used mostly for agriculture and commerce -- not as passenger vehicles.

However, SUVs and light duty trucks today comprise more than half of the new car sales in the United States. The explosive growth in light truck sales and SUVs has brought the average fuel economy of all the nation's new vehicles to its lowest point since 1980.

In 2002, the National Academy of Sciences released a report which indicated that fuel economy can be significantly increased if automakers utilize existing technologies and include them in new models of SUVs and light trucks.

“Crude oil prices remain well above \$50 a barrel. Prices at the gas pump continue to soar as well. Nationwide, the average price for regular gasoline was \$2.24 per gallon and in California, the average price is almost \$2.60. This is not a problem we can drill our way out of. Global oil demand is rising,” Senator Feinstein said. **“The most effective step we can take to reduce gas prices is to reduce demand. We must use our finite fuel supplies more wisely.”**

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