



Letters Editor, *The New York Times* (by E-mail)

April 9, 2002

**U.S. Oil Dependence is the Real Problem**

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman's April 5 Op-Ed "At Long Last?" in the New York Times makes the valid point that the Bush Administration lacks integrity in using the September 11 crisis to justify its energy policy. It fails, however, to make the broader point that one of the U.S.'s major vulnerabilities in dealing with the crisis is our overall dependence on oil from both domestic and foreign sources. Although the U.S. currently obtains only a small fraction of its oil from the Persian Gulf, Europe and Japan obtain a much greater percentage of their supplies from the region. Since oil is a globally traded commodity, any major disruption in Persian Gulf supplies would therefore cause a price spike and produce economic havoc in the U.S. as well as Europe, Japan and other importing nations. The only way for the U.S. to reduce its vulnerability to such a disruption is to reduce its overall reliance on oil.

Fortunately there is a path to reducing the role of oil in our economy that will simultaneously make us richer, happier and more secure. That path is described in the recommendations of a bi-partisan group of energy experts representing a diverse group of stakeholders assembled under the National Energy Policy Initiative. The NEP Initiative Expert Group Report, which was released on March 14, contains consensus recommendations for the transportation sector that would substantially increase the efficiency with which we use oil based fuels in existing vehicles and accelerate the commercialization of new vehicles powered by fuel cells and other non-oil based energy sources.

We have the technologies and the policy instruments to reduce our oil dependence in a manner that strengthens our economy and our national security. All that is needed is the political will to take on the domestic producer interests that are blocking change. The nation would be better served if the Bush Administration used the September 11 crisis to generate that political will as opposed to using it to justify an energy strategy expressly designed to accommodate those producer interests.

Sincerely yours,

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