



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

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New Ways Out of the Energy Mess

To the Editor:

Your March 23 editorial “A Bias Toward Waste” rightly decries 62 Senators’ choice to reward those automakers who invested in lobbying rather than engineering. Their vote penalized innovators within the same and other automotive firms who’ve already developed crashworthy, efficient, spacious, and affordable vehicle designs. Such technologies are needed to displace insecure oil, protect public health and the climate, and secure competitive advantage. Automakers that don’t rapidly bring those superior vehicles to market will lose share and jobs to quicker adopters—not necessarily American.

This blunder is part of a larger pattern. Most issues in national energy policy are as paralyzed as auto efficiency has been for 20 years, while security, economic, and environmental problems worsen. That’s why two nonpartisan nonprofit organizations, Rocky Mountain Institute and the Consensus Building Institute, launched the National Energy Policy Initiative—an inclusive and transparent search for an energy vision, goals, and strategies that command wide support.

Interviews with 75 diverse constituency leaders revealed a surprisingly broad common ground. On this, a distinguished bipartisan group of private- and public-sector energy policy experts built a policy framework emphasizing what most Americans agree about—efficiency, competition, innovation, fairness. Their report identifies key goals and strategies in four integrated areas: transportation and mobility, electricity services, energy security, and climate change. That synthesis (www.nepinitiative.org) was released to Congress on March 14 by Sen. Bingaman (D-NM) and Rep. Bartlett (R-MD). It reflects consensus on practical ways to create “an energy system that will not run out, cannot be cut off, supports a vibrant economy, and safeguards our health and environment.” The report also suggests innovative policy options for bypassing entrenched positions, including those on car efficiency, so all stakeholders can win.

Already, 33 senior energy experts have endorsed the NEP Initiative’s policy framework. Half are or were senior energy-industry executives. Others’ backgrounds include two Presidential advisors, two Deputy Secretaries of Energy, five Subcabinet officials (Energy, State, Defense, Commerce, EPA), a CIA Director, two senior staff economists from the President’s Council of Economic Advisors, chairmen or members of two Federal and three State energy regulatory commissions, and a House energy leader. Their wide political spectrum makes their message especially timely for a fractured Senate.

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