



Securing America's Future

Enhancing Our National Security by Reducing Oil Dependence
and Environmental Damage

Christopher Beddor, Winny Chen, Rudy deLeon, Shiyong Park, and Daniel J. Weiss August 2009

Center for American Progress



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Introduction

On June 26 the House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act, or ACESA. The bill would cap greenhouse gas emissions, boost investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy such as wind and solar, and jumpstart the transition to a clean-energy economy. These new investments in clean-energy technologies would slash global warming pollution and reduce foreign oil use while creating jobs and increasing our economic competitiveness with China and other nations.

But in the lead up to the ACESA vote and in the weeks since House passage, conservative opponents of clean, domestic energy have wildly misrepresented the bill's content and cost, while resorting to scare tactics and half-truths in service of the status quo. On the contrary, America's reliance on imported fossil fuels instead of clean, domestic sources of energy has long been costly to our economy, our environment, and our national security—and will become even more so if we fail to act now.

America's dependence on foreign oil transfers U.S. dollars to a number of unfriendly regimes, while robbing the United States of the economic resources it desperately needs for domestic development and American innovation. American petrodollars fund regimes and economic investments that do not serve U.S. interests. And our enormous appetite for oil—America burns a full quarter of the world's oil—feeds the global demand that finances and sustains corrupt and undemocratic regimes around the globe. The perilous implications of this arrangement—increasing power and influence of oil exporters, many of whom comprise the world's worst regimes—will become more explicit if global demand increases as some current forecasts predict.¹

What's more, the United States will increasingly turn to exporting countries that have opposing interests as oil production in friendly nations becomes depleted or less viable. Ultimately, the United States will become more invested in the volatile Middle East, more dependent on corrupt and unsavory regimes, and more involved with politically unstable countries. In fact, it may be forced to choose between maintaining an effective foreign policy or a consistent energy supply as U.S. consumers face higher energy prices.

The good news is that the United States has an historic opportunity to enhance its national security by reducing its dependence on oil. Policies to accomplish this goal, including more efficient fuel economy standards, investments in hybrid and electric vehicles, devel-

opment of natural gas-fueled heavy duty vehicles, and production of advanced biofuels would also create jobs and reduce global warming pollution.² A transformation from oil to no- and low-carbon energy sources will catalyze innovation that creates new technologies that the United States can market to other nations, leading to long-term economic growth and prosperity as well as enhanced security.³

This fall the Senate has a historic opportunity to reduce U.S. oil consumption as part of its debate on comprehensive clean-energy jobs and global warming pollution reduction legislation.

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