



This story ran on nwitimes.com on Thursday, November 17, 2005 12:45 AM CST

Bill pushes to use less foreign oil

By **SUSAN ERLER**
serler@nwitimes.com
219.462.5151

A bill aimed at breaking the nation's dependence on foreign oil was unveiled Wednesday by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind.

The Vehicle and Fuel Choices for American Security Act would save 2.5 million barrels of oil a day within a decade, and 10 million barrels a day by 2031.

The country now uses a little more than 20 million barrels of oil a day.

"We must find a way to reduce our dependence on foreign oil so America is prepared for the future," Bayh said. "We are not as free as we need to be as long as we're dependent" for oil on Saudi Arabia, Russia and other countries.

"That's not a healthy situation," Bayh said. "We have to act to secure our future."

The legislation would include tax breaks and loan guarantees to get automakers to produce more gas-electric hybrids, advanced diesel and other alternate fuel technologies.

It would encourage gas stations to pump more E-85 fuel, a mix of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent petroleum, by increasing an infrastructure tax credit to 50 percent.

The bill also would close a tax loophole that benefits businesses that purchase SUVs.

The mix of liberals and conservatives sponsoring the bill includes Connecticut Democrat Joe Lieberman and Republicans Sam Brownback of Kansas, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, and Norm Coleman of Minnesota.

U.S. Dick Lugar, R-Ind., signed on early Wednesday as a sponsor, according to Bayh.

The diverse group "is coming together to meet a major challenge that faces our country," Bayh said.

Escalating gas prices in September helped spur the bill, Bayh said.

"Hurricane Katrina and \$60-a-barrel oil was a wake-up call to the American people," Bayh said. "We want to make sure we don't just hit the snooze button."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

[EXTRAS]