

Correction to This Article

A Nov. 17 Business article on legislation aimed at reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil incorrectly referred to Rep. John Barrow of Georgia as a Republican. He is a Democrat.

Lawmakers Back Energy Independence Measure

Reliance on Mideast Oil Poses Danger, Group Says

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A bipartisan group of lawmakers who often are at odds with one another yesterday joined forces to propose legislation aimed at reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

The lawmakers, including members of the House and Senate, said the country's thirst for foreign oil transcends party and ideological differences. They said that national security is at risk because of increasing dependence on foreign oil, particularly from the Middle East.

"We cannot afford to be held captive by these unstable sheikdoms that can be toppled over or try to blackmail us," said Rep. Eliot L. Engel (D-N.Y.), one of the supporters of the measure.



From left, Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.), Ken Salazar (D-Colo.), Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) discuss energy security legislation yesterday on Capitol Hill.

The lawmakers are seeking tax incentives for automakers to build more efficient vehicles, more incentives for consumers to buy them and increased use of renewable fuels. The measure has been pushed by a group called the Set America Free Coalition, which includes environmentalists, conservative groups and other activists.

Supporters of the legislation are a diverse set, including Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.), Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), Ken Salazar (D-Colo.), Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) and Evan Bayh (D-Ind.). In the House, Republican Conference Vice Chairman Jack Kingston (Ga.) is backing the measure, as are Reps. Jim Saxton (R-N.J.) and John Barrow (R-Ga.).

Debates over energy legislation -- especially drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge -- often touch off partisan disputes. Democrats tried unsuccessfully to insert language into an energy bill approved this summer directing the president to develop programs to reduce oil consumption.

"We usually get bogged down in a drilling question," Kingston said. "This bill does not go that route."

Supporters of the measure said they were working to attract broad support and described their bill as "a work in progress." They did not immediately attract the support of leaders of the committees overseeing energy issues.

The energy bill approved this summer and signed into law by President Bush in August was characterized by supporters as a way to reduce dependence on foreign oil. But the measure contained few provisions to accomplish that goal.

The legislation outlined yesterday calls for reducing U.S. oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels per day within 10 years and much more within 20 years.

So far this year, net imports to the United States have accounted for about 59 percent of the country's oil consumption, according to the Energy Department. The percentage has been increasing slightly in recent years.

The United States has been using an average of nearly 21 million barrels of oil a day this year.

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