

Perhach, William

From: Greene, William
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2004 6:30 PM
To: Anderson, David R.; Perino, Dana M.; Holbrook, William F.
Subject: FW: letter to editor in response to editorial, Guzzling Gas, 29th March, page A22

-----Original Message-----

From: Myron Ebell [mailto:mebell@cei.org]
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2004 5:29 PM
To: Myron Ebell
Subject: FW: letter to editor in response to editorial, Guzzling Gas, 29th March, page A22

29th March 2004
The Letters Editor
Washington Post
Via e-mail

Sir or Madam:

Following the logic of your editorial in favor of higher gasoline taxes ("Guzzling Gas", 29th March 2004, page A22), I would like to suggest that a similar savings in energy and other natural resources would follow from a new tax on newspapers. Taxing newspapers according to their size or weight would encourage publishers to conserve precious energy and trees and print the sort of compact newspapers that consumers prefer. It could also save consumers money by encouraging them to get their news from lower-cost sources, such as the internet and television, which in turn would save even more resources. I look forward to your endorsement of this beneficial new tax.

Yours faithfully,
Myron Ebell.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A32082-2004Mar28.html>

Guzzling Gas

Monday, March 29, 2004; Page A22

10/26/2005

IN POORER COUNTRIES, a rise in the price of bread can set off a revolution. In this country, the price of gasoline sometimes seems to have the same kind of power. This month statistics keepers at the Department of Energy predicted that gasoline demand will set records this year, with Americans using at least 100,000 barrels more each day than we did last year during the summer "driving season." That, combined with changes in state regulations about gasoline additives and a high world oil price will, they say, push pump prices rapidly up, toward an average of \$1.67 per gallon for 2004...

Given that change, it is hardly surprising that the Bush campaign decided to highlight a statement that Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) made 10 years ago in favor of adding 50 cents per gallon to the gasoline tax. Although Mr. Kerry has neither repeated that statement nor said that it applies to the present, the Bush election team's aim, clearly, is to get voters to add 50 cents to \$1.67 and start figuring how much the election could cost them.

Taking the debate down to this level helps obscure the flaws in the president's own energy policy while distorting some of the realities behind the current price rise. For one, it is worth pointing out that gasoline prices, while higher than a few years ago, are still well short of their historic highs. Adjusted for inflation, gas prices are still significantly lower than they were at the beginning of the 1980s, and they have been at historical lows for the past decade: No wonder demand is high.

In fact, had 50 cents a gallon been added to the gas tax 10 years ago, when oil costs were lower, demand for gasoline today might well be less. U.S. automakers have fallen far behind their foreign counterparts in the development of hybrid cars and cars that consume very small amounts of fuel. Relatively low fuel prices have discouraged investment in public transportation and energy-efficiency standards. This country does spend a surprising amount of money promoting alternative fuels, from wind to ethanol: a gasoline tax or a more equitable "carbon tax" on the consumption of fossil fuels would render such subsidy spending less necessary. Even better would be removing altogether the subsidies this country gives the oil and gas industries.

Given the hidden costs of high fuel consumption -- pollution, urban sprawl, time wasted in traffic -- it can be argued that this country has paid a high price for not having higher fuel prices. A price rise now hurts people all the more because they have made choices -- living in distant suburbs, driving large cars -- predicated on low fuel prices. That fact, to no small degree, is the fault of this administration, as well as those that preceded it, for not having had the courage to wean the country off low-priced fuel when it would have been easier to do so.

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