

SURVEY: 3 OUT OF 4 AMERICANS WANT DETROIT AND WASHINGTON TO IMPOSE 40 MPG FUEL-EFFICIENCY STANDARD

Poll Finds 90 Percent Expect Much Higher Gas Prices Soon, Almost Half Now More Likely to Buy Hybrid or Other Fuel-Efficient Vehicle; Americans Want Washington to Help Big 3, But Don't Let Carmakers Off the Hook for Past Mistakes.

WASHINGTON, D.C./November 21, 2006//Will the Big 3 automakers blow it for a second time by misreading an American public that is expecting gasoline prices to start soaring again soon? As President Bush and Congress continue to huddle with Detroit vehicle manufacturers, a strong and bipartisan 78 percent of Americans want Washington to impose a 40 mile per gallon (MPG) fuel-efficiency standard for American vehicles, according to a new Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) national opinion survey to be released on November 21, 2006 by the nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute (CSI).

Other key findings of the ORC survey include the following:

- Nine out of 10 Americans expect gas prices to go up “in the near future,” with nearly half (46 percent) “definitely” expecting a resumption of higher fuel prices.
- 70 percent of Americans are not turning their back on fuel-efficiency concerns and say that they are factoring “expected future gasoline price increases into consideration in thinking about buying a new vehicle.”
- Temporarily lower gasoline prices are not sending large numbers of Americans rushing back to gas-guzzling SUV and trucks. In fact, nearly half (45 percent) of Americans are now *more likely* to buy a “hybrid or other fuel-efficient vehicle” than they were six months ago, compared to 30 percent who are unchanged in their plans and fewer than one in four (24 percent) who are less likely to make such a vehicle purchase.

Civil Society Institute President and Founder Pam Solo said: **“These findings should be a real wake-up call to any auto executive in Detroit who is hoping against hope that Americans will fall back in love with gas-hog vehicles. What Americans are saying to American carmakers is that they are ready for change. We know the technology exists for higher fuel efficiency that will save money, reduce this nation’s dependence on foreign oil and diminish the pollution linked to global warming. What Detroit needs to realize is that low gas prices have not – and will not – lead to the demise of the now very strong and continuing demand for more fuel-efficient vehicles. If American carmakers make that wrong-headed gamble for a second time, it may just be the last losing bet they can afford to make.”**

Opinion Research Corporation Vice President Wayne Russum said: **“It’s official: Reducing America’s dependence on foreign oil through tougher fuel efficiency standards is a bona fide national security issue that cuts right across political party lines. Respondents were asked: ‘Given America’s dependence on foreign oil, do you agree or disagree that greater fuel efficiency for cars, SUVs and trucks is in our national security interests?’ Four out of five respondents agreed, including half who did so strongly. Interestingly, the national security**

issued resonated even more with Republicans (82 percent) than it did with Independents (77 percent) and Democrats (79 percent).”

DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS

Other key results of the Opinion Research Corporation survey conducted for the Civil Society Institute include the following:

- ***Most Americans think Detroit is to blame for its current woes.*** Respondents were asked: “Do you agree or disagree that U.S. automakers have generally been blind to U.S. consumer needs and tastes by focusing so heavily on fuel-inefficient SUVs and trucks while European and Japanese automakers have focused their efforts on vehicle design and/or improved fuel efficiency?” More than three out of four (76 percent) agreed with the statement, compared to just 22 percent who disagreed.
- ***Nearly all Americans want President Bush to pressure U.S. automakers to focus more on the latest in fuel-efficiency technology.*** White House pressure for Detroit to take up such innovations reducing “energy consumption and related global-warming pollution” is backed by 85 percent of Americans, including 58 percent who would strongly support such pressure by President Bush. Political support for White House action on this front is strongly bipartisan: Republicans (82 percent); Independents (81 percent); and Democrats (91 percent).
- ***Most Americans think “President Bush and Congress could help U.S. automakers be more competitive by increasing the federal fuel-efficiency standard to 40 miles per gallon”.*** Such a move is supported by 78 percent of Americans, including 45 percent who back it strongly. Support for a 40 mpg fuel-efficiency standard cuts across party lines: Republicans (70 percent); Independents (78 percent); and Democrats (84 percent).
- ***Most Americans agree that “President Bush and Congress should provide incentives-such as helping to lower health care costs for autoworkers-in exchange for increased investments by Detroit car makers in fuel-efficient technologies to reduce energy consumption and related global-warming pollution.”*** Two thirds of Americans support this step, compared to less than a third (31 percent) opposing. Strong majorities of Republicans (60 percent), Independents (60 percent) and Democrats (75 percent) would back such an inducement.
- ***A majority of Americans see Japanese automakers ahead of U.S. car manufacturers.*** Respondents were asked: “Would you say that U.S. or Japanese automakers are in the lead when it comes to hybrid technology and other more highly fuel-efficient technologies to reduce energy consumption and related global-warming pollution?” Half said Japan was in the lead, compared to only 6 percent who put the U.S. in the pole position. Slightly more than a third (36 percent) see the U.S. and Japan as being roughly neck and neck. Men were more likely than woman to see Japan ahead of the U.S. by a margin of 57 percent to 44 percent, respectively.
- ***Almost all Americans want Detroit to start selling here at home the highly fuel-efficient vehicles that they make or sell overseas – but not in the U.S.*** The survey notes that “American automakers produce or sell dozens of car models that achieve over 35 miles per gallon but are

not made available to consumers here in the United States. Do you think Detroit carmakers should be encouraged to make available here at home the more fuel-efficient cars they are currently only selling abroad?" An overwhelming 90 percent of respondents said "yes," including 60 percent who said "definitely yes." Almost no difference was seen on this question across party lines: Republicans (88 percent); Independents (86 percent); and Democrats (93 percent).

- ***Most Americans would support federal gasoline taxes devoted to renewable energy/clean tech R&D.*** Respondents were asked: "Do you think President Bush and the Congress should dedicate a portion of existing or increased gasoline taxes for investment in research and development of renewable energy and related clean technologies?" Nearly three out of four (74 percent) said yes, compared to just 24 percent who said no. Support was little changed on the basis of party affiliation, with Republicans (70 percent), Independents (73 percent) and Democrats (78 percent) in agreement on such a tax policy.

For full survey findings, go to www.civilsocietyinstitute.org on the Web.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a sample of 1,016 adults (509 men and 507 women) age 18 and over, living in private households, in the continental United States. Interviewing by ORC was completed during the period of November 9-12, 2006. Completed interviews of the 1,016 adults were weighted by four variables: age, sex, geographic region, and race, to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total adult population. The margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the sample of 1,016 adults. Smaller sub-groups will have larger error margins.

ABOUT CSI

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute (<http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>) is a think tank that serves as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business that can help to improve society. CSI has conducted more than a dozen major surveys since 2003 on energy issues, including vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, global warming and renewables. CSI is the parent organization of 40mpg.org (<http://www.40mpg.org>) and the Hybrid Owners of America (<http://www.hybridownersofamerica.org>).

CONTACT: Ailis Aaron Wolf, (703) 276-3265 or aaaron@hastingsgroup.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of the CSI news event will be available on the Web at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org> as of 6 p.m. ET on November 21, 2006.