

**40MPG.ORG POLL: BIG BACKLASH AT THE GAS PUMP –  
MOST AMERICANS NOW FAVOR WINDFALL PROFITS TAX ON OIL  
COMPANIES TO FINANCE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY RESEARCH**

*Nine Out of 10 Americans Say Oil Company Price Gouging Is Happening Today;  
Strong Majorities Want Higher Fuel-Efficiency Standards, All-Hybrid Line-up From Detroit.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.///September 22, 2005///Fed up with price gouging and federal inaction on energy, four out of five Americans – including 76 percent of Republicans – would support “a tax on the windfall profits of oil companies” if the resulting revenues were devoted to alternative energy research, according to a new Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) national opinion poll conducted for 40mpg.org (<http://www.40mpg.org>) and the nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute.

Other key survey findings include: nine out of 10 Americans (87 percent) think that oil companies are gouging gasoline consumers today; four out of five adults (81 percent, including 74 percent of Republicans) say the federal government is not doing enough about high energy prices and America’s over-reliance on Middle Eastern oil; almost three out of four Americans (73 percent) believe that recent gasoline price hikes now make it more important that the federal government impose higher fuel-efficiency standards; and four out of five adults say that U.S. automakers should follow the same path as Toyota, which intends that “all of its new cars going forward will use fuel-saving hybrid technology.”

In response to the pent-up and growing public demand for more action on energy issues, 40mpg.org is launching an online petition today at <http://www.40mpg.org> allowing Americans to tell their members of Congress and the White House that they want major steps taken in terms of a windfall profits tax on oil companies and tougher fuel-efficiency standards on vehicles.

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: “**Americans have seen too much price gouging and too little action from Washington on energy prices, fuel-efficient vehicles and our dangerous reliance on foreign oil. The benefits of making 40 miles per gallon the standard for all autos in the United States are obvious to Americans: consumers save money; we reduce our dangerous reliance on Middle Eastern oil, making us more secure in the world; air pollution is reduced; and we can cut the U.S. contribution to global warming by nearly a third. Greater fuel efficiency makes sense, it is technologically possible, the benefits are real and the challenges can be overcome.**”

Opinion Research Corporation Vice President Wayne Russum said: “**Convinced that they are being gouged by oil companies and unsatisfied by inaction at the national level, Americans appear to be coalescing in substantial and strikingly bipartisan majorities behind major new federal energy policies, including: a windfall profits tax that would be imposed on oil companies to finance research into alternative energy; and tougher new fuel-efficiency requirements for automobiles and other vehicles. One striking sign of how far things have come: 80 percent of Americans**

**are in frame of mind where they want Detroit car makers to follow the lead of Toyota in powering all future vehicles with fuel-saving hybrid technology."**

### **KEY SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS**

Major findings of the new national opinion survey of 1,019 Americans conducted by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) from September 15-18, 2005 for 40mpg.org and the Civil Society Institute (CSI) are as follows:

- **Price gouging.** Nearly nine out of 10 Americans (87 percent) think "big oil companies are currently gouging consumers at the gas pump," with 57 percent saying that there is a "great deal" of such price gouging going on. Fewer than one in 20 Americans (4 percent) say that "no price gouging is going on." Political affiliation makes almost no difference in how Americans respond to this question with 87 percent of independents, 82 percent of Republicans and 91 percent of Democrats saying there is a "great deal" or "some" price gouging going on.
- **Windfall profits tax on oil companies.** About four out of five Americans (79 percent) would "support a tax on the windfall profits of oil companies" if the resulting revenues were spent on "research on alternative energy." Support for targeting windfall profits tax revenues to underwrite alternative energy research was higher than two other listed alternatives: "wetlands restoration in Gulf Coast states to minimize the impact of future hurricanes" (70 percent); and "a direct rebate to each consumer with a driver's license" (53 percent). On the alternative energy research point, a majority (51 percent) expressed "a great deal of support" and more than a quarter (28 percent) "somewhat support." Political affiliation made almost no difference in the overall level of support for alternative energy research using windfall profits tax revenues, with independents (81 percent), Republicans (76 percent), and Democrats (83 percent) all in a relatively narrow band.
- **Federal inaction.** Four out of five Americans (81 percent) think "the federal government is not doing enough about high energy prices and the U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern energy sources." Political affiliation was somewhat more evident as a factor in the responses to this question, with 83 percent of independents, 74 percent of Republicans and 90 percent of Democrats expressing dissatisfaction with current federal policies. However, it remains notable that nearly three out of four Republicans indicated displeasure with the federal responses to higher energy prices and the U.S. reliance on foreign oil. Only 15 percent of Americans think the federal government is doing the "right amount" (11 percent) or "too much" (3 percent) on high energy prices and U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil.
- **Higher fuel-efficiency standards.** Nearly three out of four Americans (73 percent) think that recent gasoline price hikes now make it "much more" or "somewhat more" important "that the federal government takes new steps to require higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and other vehicles." Relatively little difference was noted on this question in terms of the political views of those backing higher fuel-

efficiency standards: independents (74 percent); Republicans (70 percent); and Democrats (78 percent). Fewer than one in five Americans (19 percent) said that gas price hikes have had no impact on their thinking about fuel-efficiency standards and 6 percent said they are now less likely to support tougher fuel-efficiency standards.

- Hybrid technology. Four out of five Americans now think that "U.S. automakers should follow the same path" as Toyota, which "has announced that all of its new cars going forward will use fuel-saving hybrid technology." This view is shared by 80 percent of independents, 73 percent of Republicans and 86 percent of Democrats. Support for an "all hybrid" approach for U.S. vehicles was particularly strong in the West at 87 percent.

Full results from the new ORC survey are available online at <http://www.40mpg.org>.

An earlier March 17, 2005 ORC survey commissioned by 40mpg.org and CSI found that two out of three Americans think that it is patriotic to buy a fuel-efficient vehicle that uses less gasoline and, therefore, requires this country to import less oil from the Middle East. Only a third of Americans disagreed with this statement, including 14 percent who did so strongly.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

Survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a sample of 1,019 adults aged 18 and over living in private households in the continental United States. Interviewing was completed by Opinion Research Corporation during the period of September 15-18, 2005. Completed interviews of the survey 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 is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the complete sample of 1,019 adults. Smaller sub-groups will have larger error margins.

## **ABOUT THE GROUPS**

Launched in March 2005, the 40mpg.org Web site includes powerful features that permit visitors to: determine how much they would save by getting 40 miles to the gallon; compare and contrast one vehicle's fuel-efficiency ratings with those of others; monitor how individual members of Congress weighed in on the most recent fuel-efficiency standard votes; contact automakers to speak out in favor of more fuel-efficient vehicles; and send a letter to the editor of a local newspaper urging the adoption of a 40 mpg fuel-efficiency standard. 40mpg.org is not affiliated in any way with the maker or makers of any vehicles or fuel-efficiency technology.

To drive home the potential benefits of a higher federal fuel efficiency standard, the 40mpg.org Web site features a powerful calculator that allows visitors to plug in estimates for their current vehicle's fuel efficiency level, a typical price paid for gasoline

in recent weeks, and total number of miles driven per year. For example, a driver who gets 17 miles to the gallon, pays \$3.25 a gallon for gasoline and drives an estimated 20,000 miles per year, could achieve the following each year by switching to a 40 mpg vehicle: save \$2,199 at the gas pump; require 676 fewer gallons of gasoline from Middle East oil; and cut personal air pollution by 13,529 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions.

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute (CSI) 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. The 40mpg.org campaign is a project of CSI.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A streaming audio recording of the news event will be available on the Web as of 6 p.m. EST on September 22, 2005 at <http://www.40mpg.org>.