

October 2, 2009

## Guest editorial: Standard will save car owners money

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### Other Views

President Barack Obama's new clean car standard is the biggest single step the United States has taken to curb global warming and ease our oil addiction. It demonstrates to the world that the United States is finally confronting the threat of global warming.

This fuel-economy measure is necessary because the world's leading scientists agree we must cut pollution to reduce climbing temperatures.

You don't care about global warming? Maybe you care about our addiction to uncertain supplies of foreign oil. Driving cars that get 35.5 mpg — the average set out in the new mileage requirement — rather than the current average of 25 mpg will cut our oil imports. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates the reduction will save nearly the equivalent of the oil we buy from Saudi Arabia each year.

The new standard can be achieved without compromising safety, and it will save money.

From 1975 through 1989, when the first federal fuel-economy rules doubled our gas mileage, 86 percent of the improvements came from better technology rather than from reductions in the size or weight of vehicles. At the same time, airbags and other safety improvements dramatically reduced the highway fatality rate.

To be sure, the technology needed to produce cleaner cars will add to their drive-away cost. But because we will use less gas, we will save so much at the pump that we will be able to pay for the new gas-saving technology and still have real money left over. The Obama administration estimates that the new rule will mean a net savings of \$1,700 over the life of the average vehicle.

In short, the new standard will bring down the overall cost of owning and operating a new car.

### 35.5 mpg is only a start

Controlling global warming pollution is auto mechanics, not rocket science. All automakers have the advanced engines, transmissions, high-strength lightweight materials and aerodynamics technologies to safely achieve this new standard and go beyond it.

Go beyond it? Yes. Advanced technologies such as electric vehicles are poised to join hybrids on the road. The previous set of fuel-efficiency standards topped out in 1989. Automakers fought updated standards. It took 20 years to agree to new requirements that put U.S. automakers in the business of producing safer, cleaner cars that begin to meet the needs of fighting global warming. It's like painting a bridge: Once work is done at one end, it is time to begin again at the other.

So, with the new standard running through 2016, it is not too early to tell automotive engineers about the cars we want to see in 2017 and the fuel economy they must achieve. Buoyed by technological advances — and political will — we can do a lot better than 35.5 mpg.

Here's another reason to act: It is beyond time to make the American automobile industry more competitive with foreign manufacturers.

Middle Tennessee has a unique interest in the industry's competitiveness and the next generation of vehicles: Nissan is planning to make Nashville one of its key launch points when it introduces the Leaf electric car late next year and begins producing 150,000 of the vehicles at its Smyrna plant in 2012.

Saving money and the environment. Cutting our oil addiction. Building a new, competitive auto industry. How can we afford to not embrace the new mileage standard?