



#### 4. **ALTERNATIVE FUELS: Bipartisan bill would mandate flex-fuel vehicles** (05/04/2011)

**Hannah Northey, E&E reporter**

A bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced legislation yesterday that would bar almost all new cars in the United States from using only petroleum as a fuel source by 2017.

Reps. John Shimkus (R-Ill.), Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.) introduced the "Open Fuel Standard Act," which calls for a gradual increase in the number of American cars operating on "flex fuels" or other sources of energy.

"I just think with gasoline prices rising the way they are, this is the time to get it done," Engel said. "It's a concept I've pushed for a long time and the Republicans are now in the majority, so I thought it was important to get colleagues to do this with me."

Under the measure, at least 50 percent of new cars would have to use "flex fuels," natural gas, hydrogen, biodiesel, plug-in electric drive or fuel cells along with petroleum, by 2014. Eighty percent of new cars would be the mandate by 2016, and 95 percent would have to reach the standard by 2017. Flex-fuel vehicles can run on gasoline, ethanol, or any combination of the two.

Engel said Brazil is a prime example of a country that fosters the use of flex fuels in the cars the country manufactures, a practice that increases competition and the development of clean energy. The ratio of flex-fuel vehicles in Brazil shot from zero to 70 percent in three years, the lawmakers said.

"We see how much gasoline is rising, we see how much oil is rising, and in Brazil, there's competition and I think competition keeps prices down," Engel said.

The bill would also provide certainty for investors producing alternative fuels and fueling stations, foster competition and increase the production of clean fuels, the lawmakers say.

Shimkus and Engel both sit on the House Energy and Power Subcommittee and will likely bring up the measure at the subpanel's hearing tomorrow.

Shimkus said consumers should be given more choices at the pump and added that the "consumer can then make a choice based on price or the energy source."

The measure is also being touted as a means of forcing petroleum to compete on the open market with other fuel types, potentially protecting the United States from repeated oil supply shocks and price spikes.

The bipartisan lawmakers say the Big Three auto companies in Michigan have in the past stated their willingness to make half of their new vehicles flex-fuel by 2012, the cost of doing which is only about \$100 per vehicle.

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