# Bush's fuel economy goals will ruin auto industry

*by The Detroit News*

President George W. Bush's executive order calling on federal agencies to act faster to regulate automotive fuel economy and increase alternative fuel supplies goes a long way toward making him seem green, but American workers will pay the price.

Nonetheless, there he was in the White House Rose Garden on Monday, flanked by administrators from the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Departments of Transportation, Energy and Agriculture, telling them to have greenhouse gas emissions reduction plans in hand by the end of 2008.

Environmental activists couldn't have scripted it any better. Armed with the president's executive order, they'll ramp up their assault on the auto industry until the Big Three are forced to build vehicles that environmentalists want but that consumers have largely rejected.

The president's push to make cars and trucks more fuel-efficient isn't lost on the domestic automakers. They've responded to consumer demand by creating gas-electric hybrids and flex-fuel vehicles and will continue to do so if there's a real market for these products.

Forcing unrealistic and unattainable mandates on them will hamper these efforts and drive their North American business operations further into debt. A better and more rational approach was offered by Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., at a speech at the Detroit Economic Club on Monday. The chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee rightly says pollution reduction plans should be across all industries and not be focused on increased fuel economy standards, which have never reduced our consumption of foreign oil.

"As auto industry leaders are well aware, every industry will have to tithe," he said in Detroit. He went on to say that "it is becoming clear that regulating miles per gallon is no longer adequate" in the debate about greenhouse gases. That's because consumers have responded to every increase in the failed corporate average fuel economy standards by buying larger cars and trucks and driving them farther.

Arbitrarily increasing the standard to 35 miles per gallon, or higher as many Democrats in Congress want, won't save the amount of fuel that's being suggested. It never has. Similarly, simply expanding the artificial market for ethanol also won't work. But it will have a continued drastic affect on the food supply. The price of corn used for livestock feed and processed food has nearly doubled in the last nine months, according to the Grocery Manufacturers Association, and that's expected to continue given the push to create a market for the corn-based fuel.

Alternative fuels are part of the answer, but, like any strategies for reducing pollution, should be part of a

broader plan. That's the path Dingell is leading Congress down and it's the most appropriate and realistic one being considered.

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