



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Senator Joseph I. Lieberman

“Energy Security: An American Imperative”
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman
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Good morning, and welcome to this hearing which is entitled “Energy Security: An American Imperative.”

The high price of gasoline today is literally wounding American families, businesses, and farmers and it is causing the American economy to stagger. It threatens to impose terrible hardship this winter on families in places like New England that rely heavily on home heating oil.

The near total dependence of our economy - particularly the transportation sector - on oil is weakening our nation’s position in the world while enriching and strengthening a lot of countries in the rest of the world, many of them volatile and some of them just plain hostile to the United States of America.

For well over a generation, America’s leaders have seen this growing dependence on foreign oil but essentially sat back and watched passively as trillions of dollars of our American, hard-earned wealth has been used to buy that oil and thereby go to countries abroad. And during that more than a generation, America’s leaders have done little or nothing about that problem. Apparently, it took \$4 a gallon gasoline to wake up the American people and their leaders here in Washington, to make all of us angry and anxious, and get serious about breaking our dependency on foreign oil.

And at this moment of crisis and opportunity in America, T. Boone Pickens comes onto the national stage with a classically American message of honesty, determination, and can-do optimism. He said some things in that advertisement on television that I think are going to be long remembered and that have aroused a lot of Americans, who, like him, are sick of talk and want some action. I for one, as a Senator who’s been here for awhile, have been very pleased with what Boone Pickens has done. And he’s not just talk, he’s offered us a plan—the Pickens Plan -- which has been described, accurately, I believe, as a sweeping and innovative action program to loosen the grip that oil has on America.

The Pickens Plan has attracted attention, in part, because the author of the strategy to cut our reliance on oil is himself a legendary oilman. It has also attracted attention because Boone Pickens has invested a large amount of his own money to educate the public about the crisis and his proposed response to it. But most important, I think, the plan has attracted attention because it is bold.

I am very pleased to have Mr. Pickens here as a witness today. Frankly, I am pleased because I hope his boldness will infect a lot of other people here in Washington with the power to do something about it so that we will be motivated to come together, forget our political differences, and do what is right for our country by getting something big done to break our dependence on foreign oil.

We have taken incremental steps over the years, and I have supported them. But the fact is they are woefully inadequate to the crisis that America faces. I, for one, am spoiling for some bold T. Boone Pickens type action and I know I am not alone.

We have a second panel that will testify today. Three witnesses who, like Mr. Pickens, are well positioned to recommend strong steps that can enhance U.S. energy security and lift an economic burden from American families, farmers, and businesses.

Immediately after this hearing, Senator Collins and I are going to join Senators Brownback and Salazar in taking one such bi-partisan step. We’re going to introduce a bill called the Open Fuel Standard Act. One of our

witnesses, Dr. Luft, has helped craft that bill, and I would not be surprised if he discusses it this morning. For me, this morning's hearing provides an important opportunity to listen, learn and then, together, act. Senator Collins?