



TO: Pew Campaign For Fuel Efficiency

FROM: The Mellman Group, Inc.

RE: Voters Believe Passing Increased Fuel Efficiency Standards Is The Most Important Accomplishment This Congress Could Enact

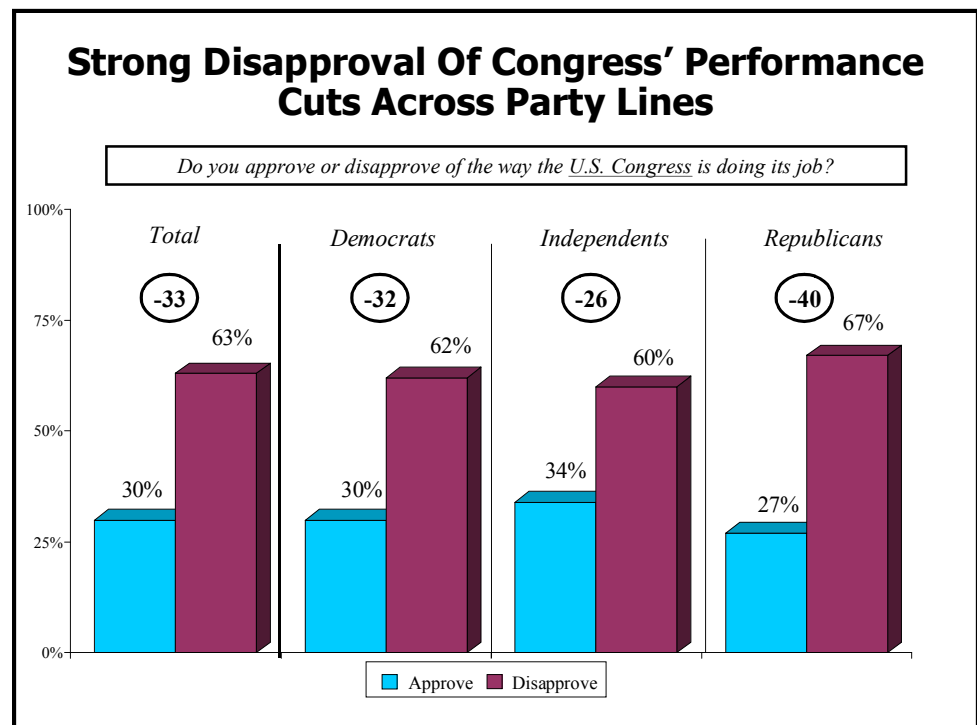
DATE: October 26, 2007

This analysis represents the findings of a national survey of 1000 likely 2008 general election voters. Interviews were conducted by telephone October 16 to October 21, 2007. To insure an unbiased sample, random-digit-dialing techniques were used and respondents screened for being likely voters. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.

Voters believe passing tougher fuel efficiency standards should be one of the very top priorities for Congress. Americans overwhelmingly support stricter CAFE standards but go further, with more voters identifying it as a top legislative priority than all but one of twenty other bills we examined. Only Social Security/Medicare reform ranks higher. With Congress held in low repute, CAFE provides a lifeline to the beleaguered institution, with more voters saying passage of stricter fuel economy standards would make them feel positively about Congress than any of the other legislative proposals we examined.

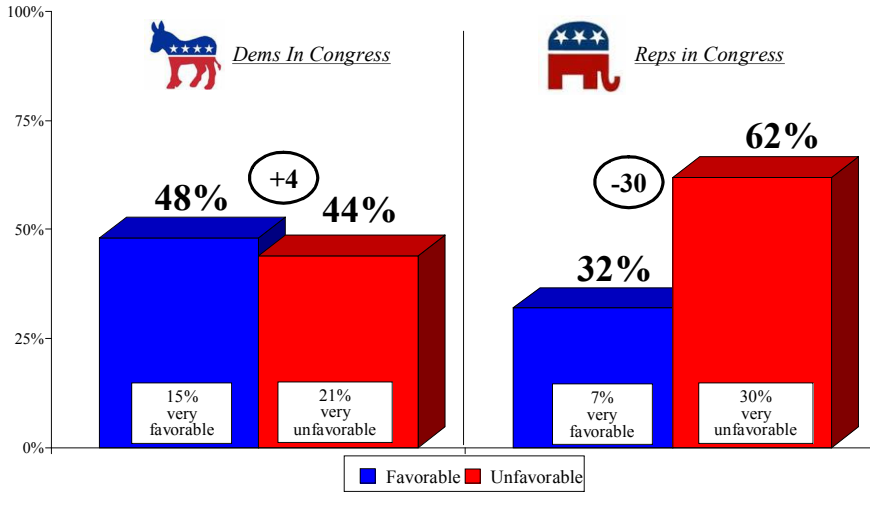
CONGRESS IS HELD IN LOW REPUTE IMPORTANTLY BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF WHAT VOTERS REGARD AS SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Voters are quite negative in their assessments of Congress' performance, with 63% disapproving of the way Congress is doing its job. Just 30% approve. Disapproval of Congress is a bipartisan affair, with 62% of Democrats joining 67% of Republicans and 60% of independents in expressing negative sentiments.



Congressional Democrats Enjoy A Stronger Image Than Republicans

Overall, do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable impression of _____?



However, these negative assessments do not impact both parties equally, as Congressional Democrats enjoy a far better image with voters than do their Republican counterparts. A narrow plurality of voters have a favorable opinion of Congressional Democrats (48% favorable to 44% unfavorable), while a substantial majority of Americans have an unfavorable view of Republicans in Congress (32% favorable, 62% unfavorable.).

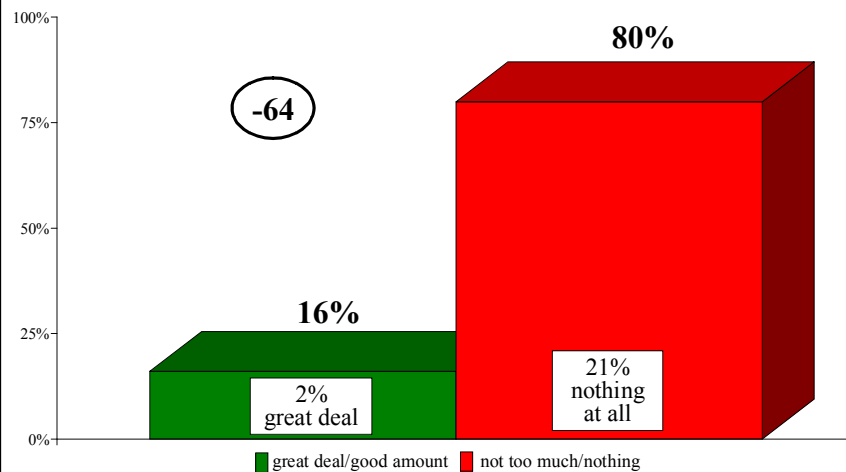
The job approval question suggests more negative views of both parties, but still reflects a clear advantage for Democrats. Eleven percent more voters approve of Democrats’ performance than of Republicans’, while disapproval is 12 points higher for the GOP. Thus, while majorities evaluate both parties negatively, on this measure Congressional Democrats enjoy a net 23-point advantage over Republicans.

A primary reason Congress is held in such low regard is the perception that little of importance has been accomplished. Eighty percent (80%) of voters say Congress has done either “not too much” (59%) or “nothing at all” (21%).

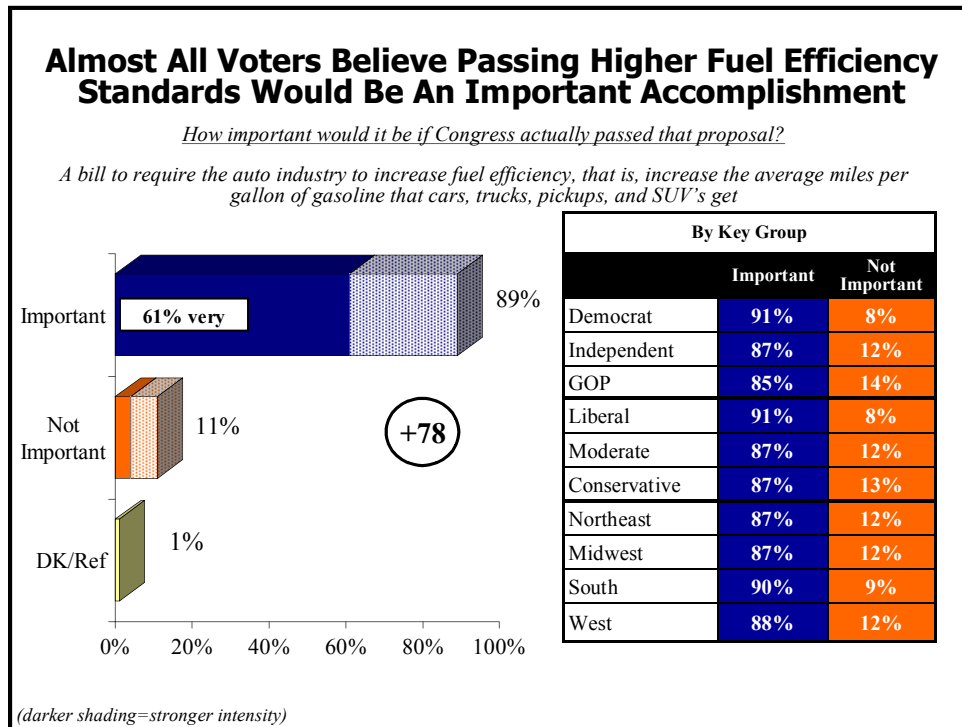
Democrats do not escape culpability in this regard. Seventy-one percent (71%) say the Democrats have accomplished “not too much” (51%) or “nothing at all” (20%).

Most Voters Think Congress Has Accomplished Little

Overall, how much do you think Congress has accomplished this year: a great deal, a good amount, not too much, or nothing at all?



PASSING INCREASED FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS WOULD CUT AGAINST THIS IMAGE AND BE SEEN AS A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT



Americans overwhelmingly favor stricter CAFE standards (87% favor to 9% oppose). Moreover, passing higher fuel efficiency standards would be the strongest antidote available to the perception that Congress is not accomplishing much. Nearly nine-in-ten voters (89%) say that passing a bill to “require the auto industry to increase fuel efficiency...” is an important accomplishment compared to only 11% who said it was not an important accomplishment. In fact, a strong majority

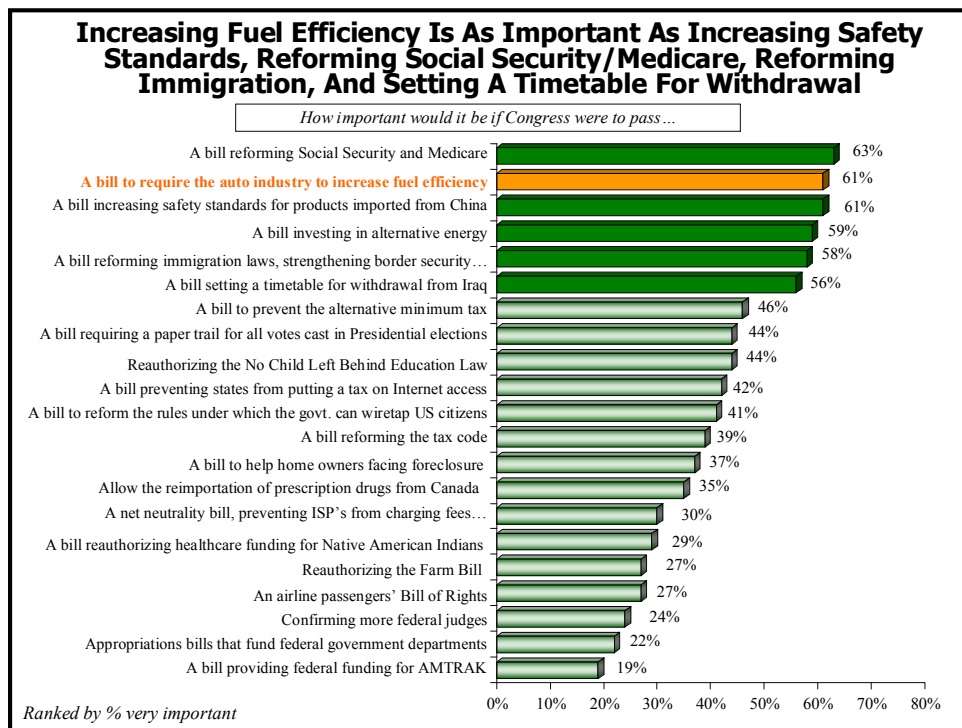
(61%) say enacting higher standards would be a *very* important accomplishment.

The significance attributed to increased standards is clear across partisan, ideological and geographic lines. Ninety-one percent (91%) of Democrats, 87% of independents, and 85% of Republicans agree that passage of CAFE would be important. Similarly large majorities of voters across ideology -- 91% of liberals, 87% of moderates, and 87% of conservatives -- also believe that passing higher fuel efficiency standards would be an important accomplishment. The same is true across the country, as 87% of those in the Northeast see increasing these standards as important, as do 87% in the Midwest, 90% in the South, and 88% in the West.

ONLY SOCIAL SECURITY/MEDICARE REFORM IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CAFÉ

To assess the relative importance of this issue, we asked voters to tell us how important it would be for Congress to act on 20 other matters; only one issue, Social Security/Medicare reform, ranked higher than increased fuel efficiency. Note that there is, in fact, no single extant proposal to reform these programs and its precise content would no doubt generate considerable debate. Thus, CAFE emerges as the single most important *realistic* accomplishment for this Congress.

As the chart above indicates, increasing fuel efficiency standards (61%) is an accomplishment on par with increasing safety standards for products imported from China (61%), investing in alternative energy (59%), and immigration reform (58%). It is an even higher priority for more voters than setting a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq (56%). Passing higher standards is considerably more important to voters than appropriations bills, federal judges, AMTRAK reauthorization, the Farm Bill, and other issues before Congress.



Perhaps the most telling indicator of this issue's significance is the way in which it crosses party lines. Independents place a higher priority on fuel efficiency standards (57% very important) than on any other issue including preventing the alternative minimum tax from hitting the middle class (49%), reauthorizing No Child Left Behind (48%) and allowing re-importation of prescription drugs from Canada (40%). For Democrats, increasing fuel efficiency standards (70% very important) is an

accomplishment second only to setting a timetable for withdrawal in Iraq (76% very important) and is more important than guaranteeing a paper trail in the 2008 Presidential election (52%), reforming Social Security and Medicare (67%) and allowing re-importation of prescription drugs from Canada (37%). Among Republicans, immigration reform (64% very important), increasing safety standards (57%) and reforming Social Security and Medicare (56%) are the only priorities that outrank fuel efficiency standards (52%), which is, in turn, more important than reauthorizing NCLB (37%), preventing the alternative minimum tax (42%), and reforming the tax code (41%).

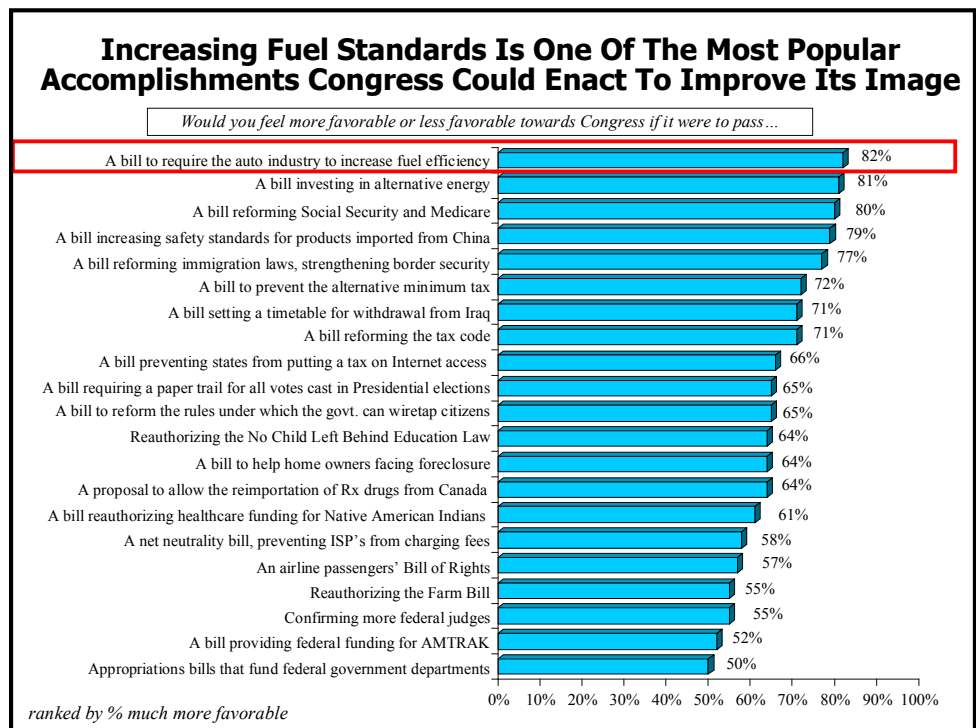
Raising fuel efficiency standards is a clear priority in every section of the country as well. Of the 21 proposals we tested, increasing fuel efficiency standards was a clear first in the West, over reforming immigration laws; tied for first in the Midwest; the 4th most important in the Northeast, and tied for 3rd in the South.

VOTERS SAY PASSING CAFE WILL IMPROVE THEIR VIEW OF CONGRESS

Voters say passing stricter fuel efficiency standards will do more to improve their view of Congress than would action on any of the 20 other priorities we examined. All told, 82% say they would feel more favorable towards Congress (53% much more favorable, 29% somewhat more favorable), and 81% said they would feel more favorable towards Democrats in Congress (46% much more favorable, 35% somewhat more favorable), if higher standards were enacted. No other legislation improves Congress' image with more voters than does CAFE. Alternative energy (81%) and Social Security/Medicare reform (80%) are close, but actions like passing appropriations bills and confirming more federal judges do very little to improve Congress' standing with the electorate.

Enacting higher fuel efficiency standards would generate good will for Congress across the political spectrum, with 91% of Democrats, 80% of independents and 74% of Republicans all saying they would feel more favorable towards Congress if it took this action.

The power of this issue is perhaps most clearly on display in the number of Republicans who would feel more favorably toward Democrats in Congress should they pass higher standards. Three out of four Republicans (76%) say their image of Democrats in Congress would be enhanced if the Congress passed CAFE. Enacting higher standards would also improve Democrats' image among three-quarters of independents (78%) and 86% of Democrats.



Congress would reap benefits from stricter fuel economy standards in every corner of the country. Congress' image would improve among 83% of voters in the Northeast, 77% in the Midwest, 83% in the South, and 84% in the West.

CONCLUSION

For those concerned about the low esteem in which Congress is held, passing CAFE is an essential part of the answer. An important cause of voters' negative assessments of Congress is the institution's failure to enact legislation the public regards as important. Stricter fuel economy standards meet that standard like no other item on the Congressional agenda. More people regard CAFE as an important accomplishment than any other except Social Security/Medicare reform, and more voters say passage of CAFE would improve their image of Congress than make that claim about any of 20 other proposals we examined. Enacting stricter CAFE standards is the best single legislative approach to improving the image of Congress.