



Baker Institute experts cite shortcomings in U.S. energy bill

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Energy experts at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy argue that while new fuel economy standards set by the 2007 energy bill are a step in the right direction, they won't be sufficient to cut U.S. oil imports.

The analysis is contained in a document from the Baker Institute Energy Forum that answers frequently asked questions about the new U.S. energy bill.

The document also describes talk of energy independence as "ridiculous" and suggests it "may not even be a worthwhile goal."

The document, "U.S. Energy Policy FAQ: The U.S. Energy Mix, National Security and the Myths of Energy Independence," was prepared by Amy Myers Jaffe, the Wallace S. Wilson Fellow in Energy Studies at the Baker Institute; Kenneth Medlock, fellow in energy studies at the Baker Institute; and Lauren Smulcer, program associate at the Baker Institute Energy Forum. To read the document, go to

http://www.rice.edu/energy/publications/FAQs/WWT_USEnergyFAQ_020408.pdf
<http://www.rice.edu/energy/publications/FAQs/WWT_USEnergyFAQ_020408.pdf> .

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 was signed into law Dec. 19, 2007. It focused on automobile fuel economy, development of biofuels and energy efficiency in public buildings and lighting.

The bill mandates an increase in corporate average fuel economy standards (CAFE) to 35 miles per gallon for new automobiles by 2020, with first improvements required in passenger fleets by 2011. According to the authors, this new policy won't be enough to lower U.S. oil imports; rather, it will only be able to ameliorate the projected increase in U.S. oil imports over the next 10 years.

On the possibility of achieving total energy independence, the authors wrote, "Eliminating 12 million b/d of oil imports from our daily lives is not plausible." They analyzed the viability of other fuels like ethanol, wind, coal and nuclear.

The FAQ also addresses such issues as global oil production, uses of imported energy, alternative energy sources and the U.S. energy policy options.

The Baker Institute acknowledged the role of Shell Oil Company in providing public polling data on U.S. energy policy to aid the institute's effort to inform the public about energy use and national strategy.