

Hatch, Pickens join to push natural-gas cars

Energy » The two are backing legislation on tax credits for buying the vehicles.

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Washington » Sen. Orrin Hatch teamed up with T. Boone Pickens on Wednesday to promote legislation that would boost natural-gas-fueled vehicles through tax incentives.

The Utah Republican and the Texas oilman -- along with Senate Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#) and Democratic Sen. [Bob Menendez](#) of New Jersey -- say the measure could help curb pollution and create American energy independence at the same time.

Hatch in 2005 sponsored the CLEAR ACT (Clean Efficient Automobiles Resulting from Advanced Car Technologies), which promoted the manufacture and purchase of hybrid cars.

"I've been very pleased with the growth and use of [hybrid-electric vehicles](#) in this country since the passage of the Clear Act," Hatch said at a Capitol news conference. "But I've been less pleased with the growth of natural gas as a transportation fuel. I believe strongly that we need an extra push to spur on the greater use of natural gas, to get more natural gas vehicles on our roads."

The bill would extend for 10 years [tax credits](#) for buying natural-gas powered vehicles, for installing refueling outlets and for converting regular gas-fueled cars to natural gas. It also would allow states and local governments to bond to finance natural-gas vehicle projects, and to allow new natural gas vehicle manufacturing plants to write off 100 percent of the costs to build the plant.

Pickens, who has spent \$60 million to promote a shift to a wind-solar-natural-gas-run America, said the security of the nation is put at risk by continuing to spend billions on oil from "less-than-friendly" countries.

"The only way you can win this battle is on your own resources," Pickens said, noting that America has the cheapest and most abundant sources of natural gas in the world.

Reid, D-Nev., said natural-gas vehicles could save consumers money and help the environment at the same time.

"We must get serious about using cleaner burning natural gas and renewable energy, and this legislation is a strong step in the right direction," Reid said.

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