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## Too Much Pork and Too Little Sugar

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Wow, I am so relieved that Congress has finally agreed on an energy bill. Now that's out of the way, maybe Congress will focus on solving our energy problem.

Sorry to be so cynical, but an energy bill that doesn't enjoin our auto companies to sharply improve their mileage standards is just not serious. This bill is what the energy expert Gal Luft calls "the sum of all lobbies." While it contains some useful provisions, it also contains massive pork slabs dished out to the vested interests who need them least - like oil companies - and has no overarching strategy to deal with the new world.

And the world has changed in the past few years. First, the global economic playing field is being leveled, and millions of people who were out of the game - from China, India and the former Soviet empire - are now walking onto the field, each dreaming of a house, a car, a toaster and a microwave. As they move from low-energy to high-energy consumers, they are becoming steadily rising competitors with us for oil.

Second, we are in a war. It is a war against open societies mounted by Islamo-fascists, who are nurtured by mosques, charities and madrasas preaching an intolerant brand of Islam and financed by medieval regimes sustained by our oil purchases.

Yes, we are financing both sides in the war on terrorism: our soldiers and the fascist terrorists. George Bush's failure, on the morning after 9/11, to call on Americans to accept a gasoline tax to curb our oil imports was one of the greatest wasted opportunities in U.S. history.

Does the energy bill begin to remedy that? Hardly. It doesn't really touch the auto companies, which have used most of the technological advances of the last two decades to make our cars bigger and faster, rather than more fuel-efficient. Congress even rejected the idea of rating tires for fuel efficiency, which might have encouraged consumers to buy the most fuel-efficient treads.

The White House? It blocked an amendment that would have required the president to find ways to cut oil use by one million barrels a day by 2015 - on the grounds that it might have required imposing better fuel economy on our carmakers.

We need a strategic approach to energy. We need to redesign work so more people work at home instead of driving in; we need to reconfigure our cars and mass transit; we need a broader definition of what we think of as fuel. And we need a tax policy that both entices, and compels, U.S. firms to be innovative with green energy solutions. This is going to be a huge global industry - as China and India become high-impact consumers - and we should lead it.

Many technologies that could make a difference are already here - from hybrid engines to ethanol. All

that is needed is a gasoline tax of \$2 a gallon to get consumers and Detroit to change their behavior and adopt them. As Representative Edward Markey noted, auto fuel economy peaked at 26.5 miles per gallon in 1986, and "we've been going backward every since" - even though we have the technology to change that right now. "This is not rocket science," he rightly noted. "It's auto mechanics."

It's also imagination. "During the 1973 Arab oil embargo Brazil was importing almost 80 percent of its fuel supply," notes Mr. Luft, director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security. "Within three decades it cut its dependence by more than half. ... During that period the Brazilians invested massively in a sugar-based ethanol industry to the degree that about a third of the fuel they use in their vehicles is domestically grown. They also created a fleet that can accommodate this fuel." Half the new cars sold this year in Brazil will run on any combination of gasoline and ethanol. "Bringing hydrocarbons and carbohydrates to live happily together in the same fuel tank," he added, "has not only made Brazil close to energy independence, but has also insulated the Brazilian economy from the harming impact of the current spike in oil prices."

The new energy bill includes support for corn-based ethanol, but, bowing to the dictates of the U.S. corn and sugar lobbies (which oppose sugar imports), it ignores Brazilian-style sugar-based ethanol, even though it takes much less energy to make and produces more energy than corn-based ethanol. We are ready to import oil from Saudi Arabia but not sugar from Brazil.

The sum of all lobbies. ...

It seems as though only a big crisis will force our country to override all the cynical lobbies and change our energy usage. I thought 9/11 was that crisis. It sure was for me, but not, it seems, for this White House, Congress or many Americans. Do we really have to wait for something bigger in order to get smarter?