

Remarks Following a Meeting With United States Automobile Makers March 26, 2007

The President. I've just spent quite a while talking to our CEOs of American automobile companies. And I was interested in their take on my goal of reducing gasoline consumption by 20 percent over the next 10 years.

I found it very interesting that by 2012, 50 percent of the automobiles in America will be flex-fuel vehicles. That means that the American consumer will be able to either use gasoline or ethanol, depending upon, obviously, price and convenience. That's a major technological breakthrough for the country. If you want to reduce gasoline usage, like I believe we need to do so for national security reasons as well as for environmental concerns, the consumer has got to be in a position to make a rational choice. And so I appreciate very much the fact that American automobile manufacturers recognize the reality of the world in which we live and are using new technologies to give the consumers different options.

Right now most of our ethanol is made from corn. But the Federal Government is spending a lot of money to try to develop new technologies that will mean that ethanol could be made from wood chips or switchgrass. Part of that request is embedded in a request to the Congress, and I would hope that Congress would move expeditiously on our plan to reduce gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years. It's in our national security interest that we do this, it's in economic security interest we do it, and, all at the same time, it will help us be better stewards of the environment.

And now I'd like to ask these gentlemen to make a few comments. Go ahead, Rick.

G. Richard Wagoner, Jr. Yes, I'd just—from General Motors' perspective, we very much share the President's vision, and we definitely see a path through to both lower

oil consumption, lower amounts of imported oil, and fewer carbon emissions. And obviously, near-term opportunity that we are moving on right now, as the President cited, is flex-fuel vehicles that are powered by E-85 ethanol. There are millions on the road today. As a group, we've agreed to double our production by the year 2010 and then have 50 percent of our production E-85 capable by the year 2012. This makes a big difference, and there's nothing that can be done which can reduce the curve of growth in imported oil and actually turn it down like using E-85, taking advantage of what's there today.

So we look forward to the opportunity to work closely with the administration, the Congress to increase the production of ethanol and to improve the distribution. And on the manufacturer's side, we look very, very much forward to playing our role in that process as well.

The President. Thank you. Alan.

Alan Mulally. Well, I might add to what Rick said, that we at Ford absolutely are supportive of the President's goal, both for energy efficiency and independence and to be good stewards of our environment.

One of the neat things about the conversation, again, today, on the continuing dialog that we've had, is being able to—for the United States system to have options and have flexibility. And the fact that we have ethanol solutions today, hybrids coming along, and plus hydrogen and fuel cells and new battery technology, gives some great options to satisfy our need for flexibility, as well as being good stewards of the environment.

So, Mr. President, we appreciate the leadership, and we look forward to working with you going forward.

Thomas W. LaSorda. Well, DaimlerChrysler, which includes the Mercedes Car Group, the Freightliner, and

other truck divisions in the Chrysler Group, we've committed as well, by 2012, to have 50 percent of our production not only in E-85 but biodiesel. This Jeep Grand Cherokee here today is going into production as we speak, being shipped from the factory with B-5.

So we're very committed to this as well, and we think this is the answer for America to lower our dependence on foreign oil.

Thank you.

The President. One of the things that I think it's important for the American taxpayer to understand is that we're using some of their dollars to promote new technologies, and we're working with these CEOs and their respective companies to advance new technologies. They're on the

leading edge of technological change, and it's in our interest to help promote these new technologies that are coming to the market.

And I'm excited about the future. I'm optimistic we can meet our goal. I look forward to working with Congress to do so. And I appreciate you all coming today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. Participating in the meeting were G. Richard Wagoner, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer, General Motors Corp.; Alan Mulally, president and chief executive officer, Ford Motor Co.; and Thomas W. LaSorda, president and chief executive officer, Chrysler Group, DaimlerChrysler.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Executives of Large Vehicle Fleet Operations *March 27, 2007*

Mr. Secretary, thank you. I want to thank you all very much.

Yesterday I talked with the chief executive officers of U.S. auto companies about what they're doing to help us meet the goal of reducing gasoline usage by 20 percent over 10 years. Today I've had the honor of visiting with private sector companies: "Big Brown," FedEx, the Metro bus line, as well as the postal office folks, and DaimlerChrysler as well to talk about how we are using new technologies to convert truck fleets, bus fleets to vehicles that will be able to help meet the goal of reducing gasoline usage by 20 percent over 10 years.

The reason I've come is, I want the American people to understand that there are new technologies on the market that are being used every single day, but there's more we can do. I'm looking forward to working with Congress to meet this goal. And they need to pass meaningful energy legislation as soon as possible, all aiming

at making sure that we promote technologies that, for the sake of our national security and for the sake of good environmental policy, we reduce the usage of gasoline.

The goal I laid out of reducing gasoline by 20 percent over 10 years is a realistic goal. In other words, this isn't a pipedream; this is something that our Nation can accomplish. It's going to take more research dollars; it's going to take working with the private sector; and it's going to take innovative leadership. And I thank the folks here who are representing companies that have got innovative leadership, people willing to make use of technologies that change the way we drive and will change the way we live.

So I appreciate you all being with me. It's an honor to be with you. Thank you for your time.