

Quiz Congressional Candidates On Auto-Choice Issues

The attention of voters across the nation has been focused on the upcoming presidential election, but don't forget that a number of critical decisions affecting automobile choice legislation will be made in Congress next year.

And regardless of who wins the race for the White House, there will be scores of new representatives and senators in Washington next year because of retirements and reappointment.

Before you make your final choice regarding your Congressional representatives, you might want to ask the various candidates how they feel about various issues relating to automobile choice, including Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards, programs designed to scrap older vehicles, and federal restrictions on older vehicles.

Let your candidates know how you feel about the importance of auto choice, safety and jobs, and then ask them how they stand on those important issues. Many of the candidates will respond positively if they hear from enough of us. So please encourage your friends and neighbors and fellow classic car club members to stand up and speak out.

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Speaking of Congress, that on-again, off-again national energy bill is back on, with a Senate vote in late summer to send the measure to a conference committee. The Senate had initially passed its energy bill in February and the House approved its version in May, but logjams developed on non-auto issues. The good news: the bills do not call for higher corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards, although the watch-dog Coalition for Vehicle Choice fully expects that issue to come up in separate legislation next year.

Some provisions in the bills may be of interest to Mustang Club of America members, including stronger requirements for fleet operators to purchase alternative-fueled vehicles, increased tax deductions for vehicles using alternate fuels, higher allowances from employer-subsidized transit passes and limits on employer-paid parking.

Pending developments on the energy front will bear watching when the new Congress convenes.

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Here's some encouraging news from the Coalition for Vehicle Choice: New data from 1991 show that the encouraging highway safety trends from the 1980s are continuing. Safety belt use last



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year rose to an all-time high of nearly 60 percent, saving more than 5,000 lives, while drunk driving fatalities fell to a 10-year low.

Both factors contributed to a record low in the highway fatality rate, now 40 percent lower than in the late 1970s, despite more cars and drivers.

But with more than 41,000 traffic deaths last year, and many more serious injuries, the need for continued emphasis on highway safety is crystal clear. And so is the argu-

ment against arbitrary increases in fuel-economy mandates, which would mean more downsizing, more downweighting and less safety protection.

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Don't confuse fuel economy standards with tailpipe emission standards, despite what some environmentalists and some members of Congress have been saying.

According to a National Academy of Sciences report on fuel economy, released last April, fuel economy improvements will not directly affect vehicle emissions of hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and NOx because the emissions standards in grams per mile are identical for every passenger car or light truck, as appropriate, regardless of fuel economy.

Those who call for increased CAFE to clean up the air are either misinformed or misleading the public.

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