

21ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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**Senate of Pennsylvania**

July 14, 2009

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Letters to the Editor  
The Butler Eagle  
P.O. Box 271  
Butler, PA 16003-0271

Dear Editor:

The Butler Eagle's reasoning for supporting a higher federal gasoline tax (*Gas tax increase won't be popular, but it fits energy reform agenda*) should raise serious red flags among its readers.

Perhaps one of the most telling justifications of a higher tax is to "*help GM and others sell the types of cars the government wants people to buy*". Since when did it become government's responsibility to tell you what kind of car you can purchase? What sort of limits on consumer choice will be imposed next? We can only buy whole wheat bread? The last time I checked, the American consumer was fully capable of determining what type of vehicle they desired and could afford.

Underlying the argument for a higher gasoline tax is the premise that our tax policy should drive our social agenda. We can't persuade someone that it's in their best interest to buy more fuel efficient cars? Then we will tax them into submission. How American. Why stop with higher taxes – why not just have government decree how many miles a person may drive each day? If people cannot afford higher gas prices, what makes the Butler Eagle think they can afford to buy a new car? Ironically, the Butler Eagle calls for a tax break offset for low-income drivers. Apparently it is only important to change the driving habits of some of the population.

Gas taxes are necessary to finance road and bridge improvements, and yes, they need to occasionally be raised to keep up with our infrastructure needs. But supply and demand works – even the Butler Eagle acknowledges that. People drove less and purchased more hybrid vehicles when gas prices eclipsed \$4/gallon. And most people recognize that government has a role to play, even if they disagree as to its extent. For example, government sets fuel efficiency and emissions standards, and offers subsidies for buying expensive hybrids.

But after that, Americans expect car companies to compete for their business. Build a better car than your competitor, and we will buy it. That's the American way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jo White".

MARY JO WHITE  
SENATOR, 21<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT