



An Encouraging Sign: Sens. Coburn and Feinstein Join Forces **By Leticia Phillips**

In yet another sign of mounting support for ethanol reform, news broke last night of a fresh bipartisan effort to end the tariff on imported ethanol and the ethanol subsidy that costs taxpayers \$6 billion per year. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Tom Coburn (R-OK) introduced an amendment to the small business bill that would sunset both policies less than two months from today. The unlikely pair is joined by five co-sponsors from across the country and political aisle – and a vast coalition spanning "business associations, taxpayer advocates, hunger and development organizations, agricultural groups, free-market groups, religious organizations, environmental groups, budget hawks, and public interest organizations."

Feinstein has consistently championed ethanol policy reform and led efforts to eliminate the trade barrier, which she says increases our dependence on foreign oil, raises gas prices for American drivers, and limits access to clean alternatives like sugarcane ethanol from Brazil. Late last year, the Senator was joined by 16 colleagues in urging the expiration of the tariff and subsidies as originally scheduled on December 31st, 2010.

Coburn has long been a vocal opponent of wasteful spending and has been central to recent discussions following the introduction of a bill in March with Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) to eliminate the ethanol subsidy. While Coburn's bill did not reach a final vote, it sparked a spirited debate among fiscal conservatives and led to a well-publicized spat between Coburn and Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform.

Joining forces with Sen. Feinstein and targeting the tariff helps broaden support across political and regional lines even more. The new bill will replace Coburn's previous amendment and is thought to be the preeminent push for reform, focusing the slew of efforts that have surfaced since the 112th Congress began. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has already filed for cloture on the small business bill, so a vote is possible as early as this week.

After more than 30 years of subsidies and trade protection, it's an encouraging sign that the two leading champions for ethanol policy reform have joined forces. Brazil ended government subsidies for ethanol more than a decade ago and eliminated its ethanol tariff last year. It is time for America to do the same. Free trade is a two-way street, which is made clear by the fact that the U.S. is exporting ethanol to Brazil today. As the world's top producers of ethanol, the United States and Brazil should lead by example in creating a free market for clean, renewable energy.

Ending the ethanol import tariff will ultimately lower fuel prices and provide Americans with greater access to clean and affordable renewable fuels like sugarcane ethanol. We commend the efforts of Sens. Feinstein and Coburn in leading the charge and urge clean energy advocates to keep the pressure up until the votes are tallied.

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