



## Consumer Federation of America

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### **NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION FOR GASOLINE CONSUMERS: SAVE \$.37 A GALLON AND CUT OIL IMPORTS BY 9%**

#### **CFA Releases 12 Simple Tips that can Reduce Dependence on Foreign Oil and Save Consumers Billions of Dollars**

Washington, D.C.—Amid the celebration of the New Year, it is traditional to review the past twelve months and resolve to do better on more serious matters. One area that definitely got the attention of the public last year, where a great deal of improvement could be easily achieved, is the consumption of gasoline. The Consumer Federation of America is suggesting twelve simple steps that could save consumers a great deal of money and reduce the nation's dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

“If Americans took these basic gas savings measures, they could improve gas mileage by over 15%, which is the equivalent of knocking almost 37 cents off of the Department of Energy's projected price for 2006 of \$2.42 a gallon price,” said Jack Gillis, Public Affairs Director for CFA and author of The Car Book. “Looking at it another way, you can get over 40 more miles per a tank of gas!”

“More importantly, if consumers took these gas saving measures, it would enable the average consumer to help reduce our dependence on foreign oil, which a recent CFA survey indicated was American's greatest concern related to gasoline usage,” said Mark Cooper, CFA Director of Research. “If American's stick with these resolutions, as a nation we could conservatively reduce oil imports by nearly 9 percent.”

CFA has divided its resolutions into mechanical, driver and purchasing suggestions. Insuring that your car is in good repair and changing some simple driving patterns can

dramatically increase your vehicle's fuel efficiency. Doing so will translate into more miles driven on the same gallon of gas or substantial savings at the pump.

We estimate potential savings based on conservative assumption about consumer behavior. Should more drivers choose to take more aggressive measures, the individual and national savings would be greater.

## **CFA's 12 Simple Gas Saving Resolutions**

### **Simple Mechanical and Quick Fixes**

- 1. Check Your Air Filter:** A clean air filter by itself can improve mileage as much as 10% percent. Nearly one in four cars needs an air filter replacement. If an engine doesn't get enough air, it will burn too much gasoline. If consumers who need a new filter replace theirs, we'd save almost 2.8 billion gallons of gas per year and those consumers with dirty filters would save the equivalent of about 24 cents a gallon of gas.
- 2. Straighten Out:** Have your alignment checked. Not only does poor alignment cause your tires to wear out faster and result in poor handling, but your engine has to work harder which can reduce your fuel efficiency by 10%. Assuming 20% of vehicles on the road need a front-end alignment, that's wasting about 2.3 billion gallons a year. Fixing the problem can save the equivalent of about 24 cents a gallon on those vehicles with a front-end problem.
- 3. Tune Up:** A properly tuned engine can improve mileage by 4%, that's the equivalent of 10 cents per gallon. Have a trusted mechanic tune your engine to factory specifications. Assuming 20% of vehicles need a tune-up, we're wasting almost a billion gallons of gas each year!
- 4. Pump 'em Up:** Make sure your tires are inflated properly. About 27% of the vehicles on the road have improperly inflated tires. The average under inflation is 7.5 lbs., which causes a loss of 2.8% in fuel efficiency and wastes over 800 million gallons per year. Pumping up your tires will save you the equivalent of 7 cents a gallon.

5. **Check Your Cap:** It is estimated that nearly 17 percent of the cars on the road have broken or missing gasoline caps. This hurts your mileage and can harm the environment by allowing your gasoline to vaporize. Almost 150 million gallons of gas evaporate each year due to broken, loose, or missing gas caps. If you have a problem gas cap and replace it, you can save the equivalent of .2 cents a gallon.
6. **Lose Weight:** For every 100 pounds you carry around, you lose 1 to 2% in fuel efficiency. Remove extra items from your trunk or the rear of your SUV. If 10% of us are driving around with 100 pounds of excess weight, that's nearly 200 million gallons a year that could be saved. Unloading 100 pounds of weight can save you the equivalent of 4 cents a gallon.

### Simple Driving Changes

7. **Don't Speed:** For every 5 mph you reduce your highway speed you can reduce your fuel consumption by 7%. The increase in mileage feels like a drop in the pump price of about 17 cents per gallon of gas. About half of all drivers exceed the posted highway speed limit, one-seventh by about 10 miles per hour. If one-third of us take just 5 mph off our highway speed, we would save about 2.5 billion gallons of gasoline.
8. **Drive Smoother:** The smoother you accelerate and decelerate, the better your mileage. A smooth foot can save you 33% on the highway and 5% around town. For the typical driver, this translates into an average highway/local savings equivalent of a 7 cents drop in the price of a gallon of gas. Assuming 15% of us drove smoother on the highway and around town, we'd save 3 billion gallons of gas.
9. **Foot Off:** Don't ride with your foot on the brake—it wears out your brakes and can cost you 7 miles per gallon, a huge waste. If 5% of us are doing this, it's wasting nearly 2 billion gallons a year. If you're doing it and stop, it would feel like the cost of gasoline went down by 85 cents a gallon.
10. **Don't Idle:** An idling car gets 0 miles per gallon. If you are stopped and waiting for more than 30 seconds and not in traffic, turn off your engine. Don't 'warm up' your car before you drive—engines actually 'warm up' quicker while driving. Cars with larger engines

typically waste more gas at idle than cars with smaller engines. If the average consumer can knock off two minutes of idling a week, we can save nearly 400 million gallons of gas a year, which feels like knocking nearly 1 cent off the price of a gallon of gas.

## **Be Smart**

- 11. Combo:** Combine your trips. Short trips can be expensive because they usually involve a “cold” vehicle. For the first mile or two before the engine gets warmed up, a cold vehicle only gets 30 to 40 percent of the mileage it gets at full efficiency. Two short trips, due to a cold motor, can cost more than twice as much as a single long trip of equal distance! The typical household takes 19 personal or shopping trips a week that average 7 miles each. By combining or skipping just 2 of those trips, the country can save nearly 3.6 billion gallons of gas and which, if you do it, feels like knocking nearly 8 cents off the price of gas.
- 12. Be a Regular:** Don’t use high octane gasoline. Despite the fact that less than 5% of the cars on the road require premium fuel, about 15% of all the fuel sold in the United States is mid-grade or premium. Check your owner’s manual. Using 87-octane gas will save you an average 10 cents per gallon right away over mid-grade and a whopping 20 cents over high grade.

Not every car needs these maintenance measures and not every driver makes these mistakes, but if those who do stuck to these resolutions, the average savings would be huge.

*Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is a non-profit association of almost 300 pro-consumer groups, with a combined membership of 50 million, which was founded in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through advocacy and education.*