SACRAMENTO BEE Editorial
"Highway Robbery: Corn is for eating, not for driving"

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Here's another piece of the ethanol idiocy in Washington: Not only will Californians soon have to pay more for gasoline laced with corn liquor, but as a result, we'll have less money to alleviate congestion on our roads.

Blame this nonsense on Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., and President Bush. They are pushing a provision for the Senate energy bill that would require gasoline producers to use rising amounts of ethanol. Ethanol is mostly made from corn in states that Bush would dearly like to win in the next election.

The measure would eliminate the current requirement in the Clean Air Act that smoggy areas use gasoline containing an oxygen additive -- either ethanol or MTBE. But then it goes ahead to require that refineries triple their purchases of ethanol for gasoline by 2012.

The mandate hurts consumers in obvious ways: It will drive up the cost of driving, taking dollars out of the pockets of motorists and putting them into the coffers of Archer Daniels Midland, the Enron of the Corn Belt, which dominates the ethanol market. (Why is it that the politicians who are eager to give back their Enron donations seem to have no trouble taking money from -- and giving billions in benefits to -- a company that was convicted of price fixing a few years ago?)

The mandate will also hurt the country. Although ethanol is touted as a renewable fuel, a recent study by Cornell University scientist David Pimentel shows that producing ethanol from corn actually requires more energy than the fuel produces. The ethanol mandate would thus make the country more fossil-fuel dependent, not less.

But the mandate will also hit in a less obvious way: It will take dollars away from transportation investment. That's because ethanol already gets another federal subsidy -- the federal fuel tax at the pump is a nickel less on fuel containing ethanol. If the Daschle-Bush ethanol mandate is passed, federal revenues for
transportation repair, operation and construction will plummet by nearly $3 billion a year, transportation experts estimate.

So this is what Californians get from the proposed Daschle-Bush ethanol bailout - - higher prices at the pump and more crowded roads. It gives the term “highway robbery” a whole new dimension.
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