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Subject: The Renewable Fuel Standard is beyond repair; it is time to repeal it

It is nothing more than a tax on the consumer and a subsidy for big business

The Power Beat Daily

All The News That Doesn't Fit the Page

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Restore Union Transparency

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The lies of the Steele dossier that the President is a Russian agent have become the greatest threat to U.S. national security, a barrier to diplomacy between the two countries in the world that absolutely need to be talking to one another. It is time to put this dangerous fiction to rest — before we pass the point of no return on the road to a war that cannot be won.

Daily Caller: Obama DOJ Forced FBI To Delete 500,000 Fugitives From Background Check Database

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The Renewable Fuel Standard is beyond repair; it is time to repeal it.



By Printus LeBlanc

For several years the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) has placed an undue burden on the consumers and producers of transportation fuel. It became clear early in the implementation of the RFS it had significant flaws, but special interests have fought reform for fear of losing their gravy train. The RFS has turned nothing more than a government subsidy for the farmers. It is time to return competition to the transportation fuel market and repeal the RFS.

In 2005, Congress passed, and President Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Among the many new regulations created in the legislation, the RFS was birthed. The RFS mandated a certain amount of renewable fuels, mostly corn ethanol, be blended with gasoline. The amount was 4 billion gallons in 2006 with a rise to 7.5 billion in 2012.

In 2007, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 was passed. The bill increased the amount of renewable fuel to be blended. It required 9 billion gallons be blended in 2008 with an increase to 36 billion gallons in 2022. The increase amounted to a massive government ordered subsidy to be paid to biofuel producers.

Each refiner has a Renewable Volume Obligation (RVO) that is given to them by the EPA. A Renewable Identification Numbers (RIN) is a tracking number used for biofuels. To ensure every refiner is following the laws outlined in the 2005 and 2007 acts the EPA devised a way to track each batch of biofuel. Refiners must have a certain amount of RINs to meet its RVO. If a refiner does not have the capability to blend biofuel, it must purchase a RIN from another refiner that can produce RINs. A government mandate forcing a private company to buy a product it doesn't need or want, where have we heard this before?

The largest refinery on the East Coast was just bankrupted by the RFS. The refinery belonging to Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) was forced to declare bankruptcy in January. The 335,000 barrel per day refinery was over \$600 million in debt, much of that due to the RFS. PES stated it spent \$218 million in 2017 for RINs, more than it spent on personnel.

Even the U.S. Energy Information Agency knows the RFS isn't worth it, stating, "The energy content of ethanol is about 33 percent less than pure gasoline. The impact of fuel ethanol on vehicle fuel economy varies depending on the amount of denaturant that is added to the ethanol. The energy content of denaturant is about equal to the energy content of pure gasoline. In general, vehicle fuel economy may decrease by about 3 percent when using E10 relative to gasoline that does not contain fuel ethanol."

This begs the question, why is the U.S. government mandating consumers purchase a less efficient fuel?

Not only is ethanol less fuel efficient, but it also acts as yet another tax on the consumer. A 2014 study by the Congressional Budget Office found the RFS adds between \$0.13 and \$0.26 per gallon of regular gasoline and \$0.30 to \$0.51 for diesel.

Now the environmental lobby is turning against the RFS. Writing for The Hill, David DeGennaro of the National Wildlife Federation, noted the carbon pollution released by farmers plowing more than 7 million acres between 2008 and 2012 released emissions equal to 20 million cars.

The renewable fuel standard is a complete failure. It did not reduce dependence on foreign oil, fracking did. So are electric cars that don't use fuel. The RFS did not help the environment; it made it worse. If it did nothing that it was supposed to do, then why is the Obamacare mandate of energy still around? If the special interests are unwilling to reform it, the RFS must be repealed. At this point, it is nothing more than a tax on the consumer and a subsidy for big business.

Printus LeBlanc is a contributing editor at Americans for Limited Government.

Restore Union Transparency

By Richard McCarty

Union members deserve to know where their dues money is going. For too long, union members have been largely kept in the dark about their unions' finances, which has allowed corrupt union bosses to line their pockets with their members' money and get away with it for years.

Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, who served during the George W. Bush Administration, sought to change that. Of course, union bosses were adamantly opposed to additional scrutiny and spent their members' money trying to block some of Chao's reforms in the courts; the courts ultimately sided with

Chao. Unfortunately, after Obama won the presidency with the strong support of union bosses, his Labor Department was in no mood to demand much transparency from them; so the agency rolled back Chao's reforms or simply refused to enforce the law. With Obama long gone, the Trump Labor Department needs to get to work reinstating these critical reforms immediately.

Specifically, the Labor Department needs to reinstate Chao's reforms of the following filings.

LM-2 filings were supposed to include the full value of compensation packages, including things like free housing and deferred compensation; they were also supposed to include the names of buyers and sellers of union assets of \$5,000 or more, and they were to include an itemized listing of receipts.

T-1 filings were supposed to cover trusts such as strike funds, training funds, and building funds.

LM-3 filings are simpler than the LM-2; Chao's regulation concerning this filing "set the procedure by which a labor organization would lose the privilege of filing a simplified report."

LM-30 filings, which disclose union officers and employees' conflicts of interest, were enhanced to include more details, but the Obama Administration announced that it wouldn't enforce the regulation as long as those required to file the report complied "in some manner."

For anyone who doubts the importance of union transparency regulations, it should be noted that hundreds of union officials were indicted and convicted on charges of embezzlement, filing false documents, and other crimes during Chao's tenure at the Labor Department. Additionally, union officials control hundreds of billions of dollars; and unions are some of the most generous and influential political contributors.

While union transparency might seem like a dry, obscure topic, regulations like these can help prevent and reveal corruption by union bosses. If union bosses are tempted to misappropriate funds, they might think twice about it if they know that the union will have to file detailed reports with the Department of Labor. Those union bosses who choose to roll the dice hoping no one will notice their inappropriate expenditures may learn to their chagrin that an eagle-eyed union member or journalist has pored over their union's reports and spotted the misallocated funds.

Once it's discovered that union officials have misspent union members' funds, members can demand that the individuals responsible for the expenditures resign or be fired, or they can vote them out of office. Furthermore, union members can report such offenses to authorities for investigation and potential prosecution. Knowledge really is power.

"Overall, the Trump Labor Department has done a good job of rolling back Obama's detrimental regulations. Now, we need the Department to seize the opportunity and reinstate Secretary Chao's union transparency reforms. We're over a year into the Trump Administration, and the clock is ticking. We know union bosses will likely try to tie these regulations up in the courts. So there's no time to waste," said Rick Manning, a member of Trump's Labor Department transition team.

President Trump was elected with the support of many labor union members, but without the support of virtually any union bosses – nearly all of them supported Hillary Clinton. The Trump Administration should, once again, stand with workers and give them more tools to help determine whether their union's funds are being spent appropriately. Best of all, the Labor Department doesn't need to reinvent the wheel; it just needs to reinstate the transparency rules crafted during Chao's tenure at the Department.

Richard McCarty is the Director of Research at Americans for Limited Government Foundation.

The Christopher Steele dossier has become the greatest threat to national security



By Robert Romano

The past month has seen some of the greatest escalation between the U.S., its allies and Russia since the height of the Cold War, if not in the entire history of relations between the two countries.

In early February, about 200 Russian soldiers were killed on the ground in Syria after attacking U.S. forces stationed there.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has unveiled a new low-flying, high-speed nuclear missile said to be able to defeat U.S. missile defenses. Leaving aside the existence of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle warheads since the 1970s, which overwhelm targets with multiple warheads simultaneously such that they cannot all be shot down, Moscow's point was to remind us that we are vulnerable. Now, the talk is of a new strategic arms race.

The U.S. is sending arms into Ukraine to back the Kiev faction in the civil war there.

Ukraine has requested membership in NATO. NATO has responded by granting Ukraine the status of being an "aspirant" country in the alliance.

Sergei Skripal, a double agent and associate of former British spy Christopher Steele, and his daughter were poisoned in an apparent nerve gas attack in Salisbury, UK.

It was reported that Skripal might have been one of the sources Steele used in his infamous series of memos accusing President Donald Trump of being a Russian agent in 2016 during the election campaign. The attack then takes on the appearance, whether or not based in fact as being personal retaliation by Putin against Skripal for having had a hand in the Steele dossier.

Or perhaps it was retaliation for simply being a double agent. Another report suggested that Skripal's daughter might have been targeted by her prospective mother-in-law, said to be a Russian security official, upset her son would marry into the family of a traitor.

The UK has since blamed Russia for the attack and expelled Russian diplomats from its country. The U.S. reiterated the assessment that Russia was responsible for the attack.

Russia, for its part, has denied it was responsible for the attack.

Since then, the U.S. has issued a new series of sanctions against Russia for allegedly interfering in the 2016 elections.

In short, tensions are rising dramatically.

And it is hard to imagine all this happening without the Steele dossier, which combined with the Justice Department investigation that it inspired in 2016 into Trump-Russian collusion has seemingly tied the hands of the U.S. administration.

Even as it turns out the documents were politically motivated, paid for by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC), never corroborated and then used by federal officials to launch a national security investigation into the Trump campaign that never found the object of the investigation.

No matter how discredited the dossier is, or how much dangerous the situation becomes, the more the accusers double down to save face and to keep up the war footing against Moscow.

Any concession offered to Moscow, even ones to pull back from the brink, now become a "crime" against the state, something else for Special Counsel Robert Mueller to investigate, a potential quid pro quo for an arrangement that never existed in reality.

This makes war more likely.

Now, to prove the U.S. administration are not Russian agents, all actions must be cast through a prism of being tough against Moscow. On March 15, the Republican National Committee issued a memo to supporters via email, reading, "Trump's Tough-On-Russia Record" and "President Trump Has Repeatedly Sanctioned Russia And Supported Our Allies Against Russian Aggressions."

The memo highlights that the U.S. too expelled Russian diplomats in 2017, closing a consulate in San Francisco and two other diplomatic annexes in New York and Washington.

To its credit, the RNC left out the part where 200 Russians were killed in Syria by U.S. forces. But why not include it? What proves more how tough we are on a country than sending their soldiers home in body bags?

The U.S. and Russia still remain the world's foremost nuclear powers. Each is an existential threat to the other. But these incidents, coming in such close succession, coupled with the Steele dossier and the Justice Department's never-ending investigation into Trump and Russia — now Mueller is subpoenaing Trump organization financial statements dating back years before the election — make it next to impossible to engage in diplomacy. Thus making further escalation more likely.

In the meantime, Steele and Fusion GPS CEO Glenn Simpson have cast serious doubts on their own memos' veracity, especially the outrageous allegation that the Russians somehow possessed blackmail against Trump, some video with him and prostitutes in a hotel room in Moscow in 2013 that most probably never happened. Per Steele, on if the incident ever happened, "It's fifty-fifty." He had no clue if it happened. But it prompted him to bring it to the FBI, and the rest is history.

As The Federalist's Mollie Hemingway reported, in reality, "President Trump's longtime bodyguard Keith Schiller told congressional investigators that on that trip someone offered to send five women to Trump's hotel room. Schiller said he took it as a joke, and declined. He also testified that he told Trump about it when he escorted him back to his hotel room and that the two had a laugh. From this nugget of reality was spun a pornographic and difficult to believe scene of Trump using prostitutes to defile the Obama hotel bed."

The rest of the dossier has not panned out either. People were said to be in places they couldn't, threads were connected that were too good to be true on behalf of the Clinton campaign.

As a result, the official inquest into these matters is itself has become tainted to its core. Every day that goes by, more and more misconduct by the Justice Department is revealed in its handling of its investigation into Trump. The bias of investigators has been revealed, the disregard for exculpatory evidence and so forth.

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act was invoked in federal courts without verified evidence to obtain surveillance against the Trump campaign during the election. It led to the U.S. administration spying on the opposition party, a grotesque abuse of power that did far more to interfere with the elections and the peaceful transfer of power than anything Russia is accused of.

Now, one need not be skeptical about official proclamations such as Russia being responsible for hacking the DNC and putting the emails onto Wikileaks, or even being behind for this nerve gas attack in the UK, to be extremely concerned about this turn of events.

Russia could be responsible for those things. And if it were not for the Steele dossier accusing Trump of being involved with Russia and the Justice Department investigation accusing everyone who ever spoke to a Russian of treason, they might have been dealt with via diplomacy. Some of these events might have even been prevented. Unfortunately, windows of opportunity for diplomacy to cool tensions appear to be diminishing.

It's getting to the point where this could cast a cloud over U.S.-Russian relations for a generation, long after Trump has left office. Each escalation is getting harder to turn back from. Eventually it becomes more to do with national pride than the facts.

Anyone of these flashpoints is extremely dangerous in their own right. Dealing with them is that much more difficult thanks to the Justice Department's relentless investigation into the false, reckless charge that the President is a Russian agent.

It would be hard enough to repair relations without all this.

The key point is that President is innocent of the basic charge of being a Russian agent, and for everyone's sake, this witch hunt needs to end once and for all. Look at what is happening.

The lies of the Steele dossier that the President is a Russian agent have become the greatest threat to U.S. national security, a source of escalation and a barrier to diplomacy between the two countries

in the world that absolutely need to be talking to one another. It is time to put this dangerous fiction to rest — before we pass the point of no return on the road to a war that cannot be won.

Robert Romano is the Vice President of Public Policy at Americans for Limited Government.



ALG Editor's Note: In the following piece from The Daily Caller, Kerry Picket reports on the recent revelations that the Obama administration removed 500,000 fugitives from the background check database:

**THE DAILY
CALLER**

Obama DOJ Forced FBI To Delete 500,000 Fugitives From Background Check Database

By Kerry Picket

The Justice Department under Barack Obama directed the FBI to drop more than 500,000 names of fugitives with outstanding arrest warrants from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, acting FBI deputy director David Bowdich testified Wednesday.

Fugitives from justice are barred from buying a firearm under federal law. But what is a fugitive from justice? That definition has been under debate by the FBI and the ATF.

According to The Washington Post, the FBI considered any person with an outstanding arrest warrant to be a fugitive. On the other hand, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives defined a fugitive as someone who has an outstanding arrest warrant *and* has crossed state lines.

That disagreement was settled at the end of Obama's second term, when the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel sided with the ATF's interpretation. Under President Donald Trump, the DOJ defined a fugitive as a person who went to another state to dodge criminal prosecution or evade giving testimony in criminal court, and implemented the Office of Legal Counsel's decision. The decision meant that around half a million fugitives were removed from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

During a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing about law enforcement's faulty response to Parkland, Florida shooter Nikolas Cruz, California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein asked Bowdich about the removal.

"That was a decision that was made under the previous administration," Bowdich testified. "It was the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel that reviewed the law and believed that it needed to be interpreted so that if someone was a fugitive in a state, there had to be indications that they had crossed state lines."

"Otherwise they were not known to be a fugitive under the law and the way it was interpreted," he added.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently announced the Justice Department will “aggressively” pursue any person who lies on their background check.

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