

HYBRID CAR LEGISLATION
TESTIMONY OF GLENN SCHWARTZ
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Good afternoon. My name is Glenn Schwartz, and I am Chief Meteorologist for NBC10 in Philadelphia. I've been asked by Representative Leach to testify today, not solely for my 32 years of experience as a meteorologist, but also as an owner of a hybrid car for the past two years.

It's amazing how many people think hybrid cars need to be plugged in to work. I was one of them. I didn't learn about hybrids from a TV, radio, or newspaper ads, or word of mouth, it was just one article in a magazine. Even today, hardly anyone I talk to is aware of all the advantages and lack of drawbacks of hybrids. When I tell them the whole story, they are shocked.

Here's a little background about hybrid cars: They have gas engines like all other cars, but they also have sophisticated batteries that charge while I'm driving the car. Specifically, they charge when I put on the brake to slow down. The battery stores energy for use later on. The longer I drive the car on any one trip, the more fully charged the battery gets. After a good charge, I might be driving in the city, and when I stop at a light, the engine actually goes off! You can hear it happening! Now you're sitting at the light and burning absolutely NO gas, and emitting absolutely NO pollution!

My car has a computer monitor that shows me when the battery is charging, and in a different mode, shows me the gas mileage I'm getting at that instant. It also computes my mileage over each 5 minute period of my trip, plus the total mileage for that tank. I "only" get about 40 miles per gallon, since I take lots of small trips which don't fully charge the battery. My trip from Phila. to Harrisburg today gave me _____ miles per gallon. And the 2004 model of my car gets 50 to 60 miles per gallon.

It's not just about miles per gallon. Other conventional cars get good mileage. Hybrids are the cleanest cars on the road, producing far less emissions than even the most fuel efficient conventional car.

The pollution problems generally fall in two areas: ground level ozone and global warming. Ozone at the ground is most often a problem in the warm months, since sunlight and high temperatures combine with the car exhaust (and other pollution sources). The higher the ozone concentration, the harder it is to breathe. Those most affected are children, the elderly, and those with respiratory problems such as asthma and chronic bronchitis. It also can harm healthy people who exercise, work, or just spend a lot of time outdoors.

The worst ozone days are called Ozone Action Days, when we in the media urge sensitive groups to stay indoors as much as possible, and for even healthy people to limit their activity outdoors. The number of Ozone Action Days varies a lot from year to year, depending on how hot and sunny the summer is. Our worst year was 2002, when the Philadelphia area had 42 days that exceeded EPA standards. Recent studies have shown the EPA standards to be too low, so they are making them more stringent starting this year. The more cars we put on the roads, and the more miles those cars go, the more ozone pollution there is. (We're not talking about the "ozone hole" here: that's a completely separate issue, since ozone has different effects near the ground and high up in the atmosphere).

Now for the global warming effect. Global warming is still a controversial issue, even more so after these past two cold, snowy winters around here. But 2003 was just declared the 2nd warmest in the recorded history of the planet, so there's plenty of evidence it's going on. Cars release carbon dioxide, which is one of the top emissions that influence warming of the atmosphere. Hybrid cars release much less CO₂ than conventional cars.

If we could somehow snap our fingers and give all vehicles hybrid technology, we would have few serious ground ozone problems; we wouldn't need oil from the Middle East; and cars, buses and trucks would be only minor contributors to any potential global warming.

I didn't buy my hybrid just because it's environmentally friendly. It's a nice, comfortable, affordable car that's plenty quick enough to accelerate on to the dreaded Schuylkill Expressway. There's nothing special to do. I just drive like everyone else. In fact, I'll be trading in my other car, an SUV, for a hybrid SUV as soon as it comes out. I feel that as a scientist in the public eye, I can help set an example for others and let them know about this amazing technology. That is what your bill will do as well.

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