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- **Please contact your senators and representative and ask them to oppose any effort to suspend federal motor fuels user fees**
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## ***BACKGROUND***

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Federal motor fuels user fees, including the 18.4 cent per gallon “gas tax”, are deposited directly into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). With the enactment of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, the Highway Trust Fund is “firewalled” and those funds are used solely for the construction and maintenance of the nation’s surface transportation systems, including highways, bridges and transit systems. This is essential to the “user pays” convention that has been a part of the interstate highway system since its inception fifty years ago. Over half the states have the same arrangements with state levies on fuels. ASCE is adamantly opposed to efforts to suspend motor fuels taxes at the state or federal level (see ASCE Policy Statement 382, Transportation Funding). Such actions rarely produce real relief for consumers and simply end up shortchanging citizens by draining transportation infrastructure funds, resulting in slower relief from burgeoning traffic congestion, fewer jobs and further strains on general funds to replenish lost revenue.

So far, most of the congressional proposals to combat the most recent jump in gas prices do not involve suspending the federal motor fuels user fee or the Highway Trust Fund. However, Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and John Thune (R-SD) separately proposed suspending the 18.4 cent per gallon user fee for varying periods of time, and several governors and state legislative leaders have suggested lifting state levies.

## ***ACTION REQUESTED***

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Contact your lawmakers and let them know any plan to suspend user fees on gas and other motor fuels set a dangerous precedent, are short-sighted and will end up costing American motorists more money in the long run.

To send an email to your Representative, login to the ASCE advocacy website at <http://www.asce.org/advocacy.html> From there you can read background information on the issue and draft a message to your legislator. **Personal messages with local examples will receive the most attention from your Representative's office.** Please be sure to include in your message your experience as a civil engineer and any first-hand knowledge you can provide about dams in your area and/or state. If you prefer, you may telephone your lawmaker by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and asking to be transferred to your Representative's office. Ask to speak to the staff person who handles environmental issues. As always, please be sure to let ASCE's government relations office know about contacts made with your lawmakers' offices by emailing [govwash@asce.org](mailto:govwash@asce.org) or completing the online Grassroots Feedback form at <http://www.asce.org/pressroom/publicpolicy/keycont.cfm>.

## ***Talking points to oppose suspension of motor fuels user fees:***

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- Economic studies have shown that reducing motor fuels taxes rarely produces commensurate savings for consumers at the pump.
- Of the 60 cents it costs to operate a car for one mile, only one penny goes to the Highway Trust Fund in the form of a gas tax.
- A suspension would result in less money available to mitigate congestion in the nation's clogged roadways and transit systems, costing travelers even more money in wasted fuel and time.
- The 2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure outlined significant construction and maintenance needs for the nation's highways, bridges and roads. Suspending the motor fuels user fees that go directly to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) would mean even less money available for improvements to our nation's transportation systems.
- A gas tax suspension would increase the federal deficit unless it is offset by cuts to other government programs.
- Even if offsets are cited in suspension legislation, they could be credited to the general fund, and not back to the HTF.
- Most economists agree that the recent run-up in prices is due to issues of supply and demand, and a gas tax suspension would do nothing to change this imbalance.

## ***FOLLOW-UP***

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Please let ASCE's government relations office know of any contact you make with your Representative on this or any issue by emailing [govwash@asce.org](mailto:govwash@asce.org) If you have any questions, contact the government relations department at [govwash@asce.org](mailto:govwash@asce.org) or 202-789-7850.