SSDA
SERVICE STATION DEALERS OF AMERICA AND ALLIED TRADES

SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

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SSDA-AT Pushes to Reinstate Key Hiring Tax Credit

By Roy Littlefield

SSDA-AT, is actively engaging with lawmakers to restore the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which expired at the end of 2025.

We are urging Congress to reinstate the long-standing program, emphasizing its importance to employers across the industry and the broader business community.

WOTC provides a federal tax credit to businesses that hire individuals from groups that have historically faced barriers to employment, including veterans, individuals receiving public assistance, and others re-entering the workforce. By offsetting a portion of first-year wages, the credit helps reduce the upfront costs of hiring and training, making it easier for employers to invest in new employees.

For many businesses, WOTC is more than a tax incentive—it is a practical tool that supports everyday hiring decisions and workforce stability. The program has helped employers expand their teams while creating meaningful job opportunities for individuals who might otherwise struggle to find employment.

Since its expiration, employers have faced increased uncertainty and higher hiring costs, with fewer incentives to recruit from targeted populations. SSDA-AT warns that without the credit, both businesses and job seekers stand to lose out on a proven pathway to workforce participation and economic growth.

SSDA-AT continues to advocate for the restoration and long-term extension of WOTC, calling it a critical step toward supporting business growth, strengthening local economies, and maintaining an inclusive, opportunity-driven workforce.

The Power of Digital Advertising

The reason that digital advertising is so important is that search engines are where almost every customer buying journey begins. Every day Google gets 3.5-billion searches, Bing gets nearly 875-million, and Yahoo gets another 585-million search queries. That equates to a combined total of almost 5-billion daily searches. Yet despite the volume, the oldest joke in digital marketing is "The best place to hide a dead body is on the second page of Google" because 60% of traffic goes to the top three listings and less than 10% of all searchers will ever go to the second page.

Research has also shown that if a user cannot find what they are looking for on the very top of the first page of search results they will enter a new, different set of search terms rather than drill down into the initial results. Most importantly, 97% of online users perform a search to find local businesses like yours.

Paid digital advertising is a marketing method where companies pay a "publisher" - such as a search engine provider or website owner or a social media platform - each time someone views or clicks on one of their ads. Essentially, companies use the paid ads or keywords to "buy" visits to their site rather than earning them organically over time. Different companies will bid for the ad space or a specific keyword in a search, the publisher accepts the highest bid, and then places the ad at the top of the page where it has maximum visibility and the greatest chance of being clicked on. Enough click-throughs and the resulting jump in traffic will help turn the purchaser's website into a highly ranked destination by Google and the other big search engines. At the end of the day, it's a basic equation: Spend enough, place a solid ad, and you will get top placement on page one in a search.

That's why you need to have a clear paid advertising strategy for your business and a solid approach is to develop one that covers the big three pillars of online ads: Search, social, and display. Although they are all similar in some ways, they all have different advantages and can reach different audiences, so let's break them down.

SEARCH ADVERTISING BASICS: SEO, SEM, AND DISPLAY ADS

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) "organically" increases your platform visibility on search engines such as Google or Yahoo and drives more traffic to your dealership's website. Organic (non-paid) search results are ranked by the quality and content of the web page and make up most of the content you see after a search. To rank at the top of this section, your landing page needs to be relevant for the searcher and needs to have a high click-through rate. SEO makes up around one-third of all traffic to company websites and accounts for more traffic than paid and social put together, but it takes time and expertise to build. Successful SEO requires extensive knowledge of how search engines work and takes time and practice to get right because it is a moving target. For example, search engine algorithms on Google alone are updated as many as 500 to 600 times a year and requires constant monitoring and modifications to be effective.

To accelerate the ability for your business to be quickly found in web searching, you'll need to use paid Search Engine Marketing (SEM). SEM is used to describe online searches that begin by clicking through on a paid ad.

Some of the most common terms used to define to SEM activities include:

Paid Search Advertising: Short, text-based ads that are placed on search engines like Google, Yahoo, Bing, and appear at the top right-hand side of the page when search results are displayed

Pay-Per-Click (PPC): The pricing model for what you will pay if someone clicks on your ad and goes to your website or landing page. These ads appear in the top search engine slots and direct searchers directly to the page you want them to land on

Cost-Per-Click (CPC): The fee you pay when a user clicks on your ad to visit your website or landing page

Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions (CPM): Most search ads are sold on a CPC / PPC basis, but some advertising options may also be sold on a CPM basis

Display Ads: A step up from standard PPC text-based ads, this approach uses either static or dynamic images (e.g. banners, videos, audio, or polling formats) that offer a more engaging experience that helps capture the attention of your target audience and drive conversion

SEM effectively turbocharges your online marketing because paid search ads drive traffic directly to your website or straight to your service and inventory pages. The most common form of this is the Pay-Per-Click (PPC) model. On one level, paid search ads are simple.

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NET DRIVEN

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If you are a tire dealer and a big winter storm is forecast for your area, you absolutely want to advertise your inventory on Google. When someone searches for keywords you bid on, like "studded tires" or "best winter tire," their search term will trigger your text ad. Your ad will show up in the sponsored section of the search results at the top of the page just to the right of all the organic entries.

You can also use PPC to target searchers based on their geography with search ads, so it's only shown to people in your local area. It's a great way to compete in your industry and target local audiences and people who are already looking for your services. This is a cost-effective approach to getting visibility quickly and may not be as expensive as you'd think. A recent review of Google AdWords pricing shows that the minimum bid per keyword is only 5-cents, while the most expensive keywords (like "insurance" or "loans") can range up to $670 per click!

Beyond text ads, you can also use PPC strategies with "Display" ads. Display advertising is a way to grow your brand's awareness online and are targeted based on user activity. Display ads (often banner ads or "rich media" formats like video or audio) are shown to your target audience when they are browsing the Internet. With a 90% reach across all Internet users worldwide, Google's display network is the largest in the world and reaches more than 2-million sites and more than 650,000 mobile apps.

Effective display formats include:

Static Banner Ads: A banner is a simple image ad that is served onto a web page. Static banner ads typically consist of a single image file with no audio, video or additional features

Animated Ads: Animated ads are a cut above static banner ads when it comes to capturing the attention of the target audience. Animation creates movement that naturally catches the eye and works against what is known as "banner blindness," prompting target audiences to investigate your message

Video Ads: While video ads are primarily served through video content platforms like Netflix and YouTube, they can also be distributed through display ad networks like Google. The great thing about video advertising today is that almost everybody has access to a mobile phone with reasonably high-quality video capabilities and consumers love them!

Display ads are powerful tools, but require advanced audience targeting and the creative ability to build a dynamic web-based ad. To maximize your dealership's success online, you need to develop a strategy that blends both PPC and Display formats

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM MARKETING

Facebook has a huge audience - a staggering 2.4 billion people use it every month! But beyond keeping connected with friends and family, people are increasingly using Facebook to connect with businesses of all sizes. The company recently reported that two-thirds of its users say they visit a local business's Facebook Page at least once a week. Potential customers are already looking for businesses like your dealership on Facebook and having a clear, focused Facebook marketing strategy is the only way to tap into this existing audience.

Here are six ways you can significantly boost your dealership's advertising reach through Facebook:

News Feed Ads: Cost-effective ads that target unique audiences and can track traffic and conversion on your website

Conversion Ads: Target and deliver certain actions such as "Request a demo" or "Take a test drive"

Carousel Ads: Feature several rotating images in a single ad to display different models and feature packages

Engagement Ads: Best used to drive "likes" and comments on your ads, increasing validation and visibility

Lead Generation Ads: Allow users to fill out lead forms on their own Facebook wall without going to your website

Remarketing Ads: Connect your website inventory feed to Facebook, then advertise to past visitors with ads customized to highlight the products and services they viewed

Facebook's high traffic flow and wide range of ad mediums offer several ways to enhance your brand. It also allows you to promote products and services through social experiences that can drive loyalty and help create the most powerful type of marketing – word of mouth referrals.

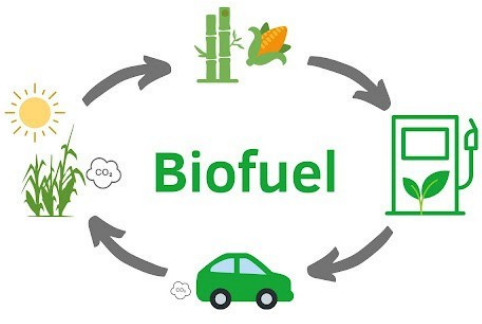
Budget Plan Would Shift More Responsibilities to States

The fiscal 2027 budget proposed by the Trump administration would reduce EPA's discretionary budget by 52%, cutting $4.6 billion compared to the previous year.

While maintaining targeted increases for drinking water oversight and tribal water access, the proposal signals a substantial scaling back in federal activity, leaving state and local entities to assume more responsibility for water infrastructure and environmental protection.

House Task Force Advance Targeted Biofuel Policy Overhaul

A House Republican task force is finalizing a biofuel policy proposal that resembles a framework negotiated by the American Petroleum Institute and ethanol groups earlier this year. The plan would grant automatic 75% compliance relief to refiners with collective capacity below 75,000 barrels per day starting in 2028, allow year-round sales of E15 gasoline and cap special exemptions for for at-risk facilities at 150 million Renewable Identification Numbers annually. Lawmakers hope to attach the measure to the Farm Bill, though divisions among refiners and farm interests could complicate passage.



Enbridge Subsidiary Wins Presidential Permits for Cross-Border Pipelines, ENR Midwest

Enbridge Energy and its subsidiary, Bakken Pipeline Co., have received presidential permits to continue operating and maintaining existing U.S.-Canada cross-border pipeline facilities in North Dakota and Michigan.
The move is expected to support future pipeline-related construction and eventually boost capacity by hundreds of thousands of gallons of petroleum a day.

The authorization covers facilities in Burke County, N.D., including an existing 12-inch -diameter pipeline from the international border to Portal, N.D. It also includes installation of the first U.S. mainline shutoff valve or pump station about 0.5 miles south of the border, along with any associated structures, installations or equipment.

In Michigan, the permit applies to an existing 30-inch-diameter pipeline in St. Clair County, extending from the international boundary to the first U.S. shutoff valve or pump station, approximately 0.3 miles from the border, and to associated facilities.

The lines in both states are permitted to carry crude oil and other petroleum products, including naphtha, liquefied petroleum gases, natural gas liquids, jet fuel, gasoline, kerosene and diesel—but not natural gas.

Enbridge Energy and Bakken operate more than 40 pipeline-related facilities in Michigan and North Dakota. The companies are proposing about $620 million in construction projects, according to Industrial Info Resources, which tracks the pipeline industry.

In Burke County, Bakken's system includes a crude oil pumping station near Lignite, N.D., which feeds a line to Steelman, Saskatchewan, with a capacity of about 145,000 barrels a day.
"These permits add flexibility to our existing permits and further support our Mainline optimization programs that are currently expected to add more than 250,000 barrels per day to the U.S. as early as the end of 2028," Enbridge spokesperson Ryan Duffy said in a statement.
He added that Enbridge's existing cross-border pipeline network transports more than 3 billion barrels of petroleum per day.

Under the permits, Bakken is responsible for obtaining any necessary right-of-way grants or easements, permits and other authorizations, and for indemnifying the U.S. against any liability arising from the operation or maintenance of the border facilities, including environmental contamination.

Citing national security concerns, the permits also authorize the federal government to take control of the border facilities if necessary.
The Michigan presidential permit does not apply to Enbridge's proposed Great Lakes Tunnel, a 4-mile structure planned to house twin pipelines under the Straits of Mackinac, and which is the subject of litigation.

Impact of Trump's Defense Production Act Move to Boost Energy Supplies Uncertain: Analysts, S&P Global

The Trump administration's invocation of the Defense Production Act was designed to accelerate US energy supply growth and lower consumer prices, but any impacts on domestic industry participants would be uncertain, subject to legal challenges, and likely to vary across sectors, analysts and trade groups told Platts.

US President Donald Trump on April 20 invoked Section 303 of the Defense Production Act, authorizing the Pentagon, Department of Energy and other agencies to make purchases, provide financial support and take other actions to expand domestic energy capabilities. A series of presidential memorandums — governing the grid, large-scale energy projects, natural gas, coal and baseload, and petroleum sectors — waived standard DPA requirements, citing a national emergency declared in January 2025 that found inadequate energy production poses threats to the economy and national security.

"The DPA provides broad, but temporary authority, subject to statutory controls, and pushing its mandates through Presidential Memorandum may expose it to legal challenges," GableGotwals attorney Scott Kiplinger, who specializes in energy and oil and gas law, told Platts, part of S&P Global Energy. "But for the time being, its invocation is intended to remove constraints on domestic supply where deemed necessary for national defense."

"The duration and scope of the memorandum will ultimately depend on future executive action and the finer contours of DPA statutory authority, but it certainly reflects the Trump administration's ongoing support for domestic energy production and energy infrastructure buildout," Kiplinger said.

Implementation

The memos said Trump had determined that financing risks and regulatory delays were preventing the energy industry from meeting national defense needs, and that agencies could now provide purchase commitments and financial instruments to enable projects that might otherwise face commercial obstacles.

"Each determination finds these areas essential to national defense and authorizes the use of DPA tools — including purchases, commitments, financial support, and other actions—to overcome financing constraints, regulatory delays, market barriers, and other obstacles that prevent timely industry response," the White House said in a fact sheet.

A White House fact sheet obtained by Platts, part of S&P Global Energy, said the order would be used to more quickly deploy funds allocated to the DOE in the Republicans' July 2025 budget reconciliation law. That legislation replaced the Inflation Reduction Act's Energy Infrastructure Reinvestment program, which carried emission-reduction requirements, with a new DOE "Energy Dominance Financing" program.

The new program gives the DOE $200 billion in appropriated loan authority

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Impact of Trump's Defense Production Act Move to Boost Energy Supplies Uncertain: Analysts, S&P Global

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through 2028, with priority given to projects that would increase US energy supplies and boost power generation capacity. The reconciliation law also expanded project eligibility to include critical minerals mining, processing, and production.

Separately, the budget law expanded the US Department of Defense's Office of Strategic Capital available loan authority by $100 billion for critical minerals production and related projects.

"In theory, purchases, commitments and support that provide capital to facilities which cannot access it otherwise, or cannot do so affordably, could change outcomes (e.g., life extensions that improve the profitability of due to-be-shuttered coal plants, and maybe some refineries)," ClearView Partners wrote in an April 20 client note.

Among the requirements waived April 20 is a Section 303 provision requirement to DOE to notify Congress before obligating funds above certain thresholds. The Center for Biological Diversity, which has sued to challenge multiple Trump administration agency actions, called the actions "unlawful" in an April 21 statement.

Sector by sector

How and to whom those funds would be distributed were key questions that would determine the effectiveness of the DPA waivers, analysts said. US oil and gas companies were probably unlikely to change their previous investment behavior, Kiplinger said.

"In terms of immediate impact on the oil and gas market, it is unlikely that the Presidential Memorandum will have an immediate effect on consumer prices," Kiplinger said. "Even before the escalation of the conflict in Iran, the Trump administration had been pushing for increased domestic energy production and energy infrastructure and regulatory and market conditions had created a challenging environment to address forecasted energy shortfalls."

In March, the Trump administration used an emergency DPA directive ordering Sable Offshore Corporation to restore operations of its Santa Ynez Unit and Santa Ynez Pipeline system. Transportation resumed March 16.

The US has remained the world's largest producer of crude oil in 2026, which the US Energy Information Administration forecasts will average 13.5 million b/d at the end of the year and 13.9 million b/d in 2027.

In earnings calls throughout late 2025 and 2026, major upstream producers often expressed skepticism of further output growth and touted cost-cutting and efficiency gains instead.

While federal financing for upstream oil and gas projects was unlikely to attract widespread interest, government-backed purchase commitments could potentially prompt domestic producers to increase output more quickly than planned, though it was "unclear if that mechanism will be used," Kiplinger said.

Unlocking the Next Wave of Innovation in US Shale, Deloitte

US shale breakevens—which include lifting costs from existing wells, incremental drilling and completion expenses, corporate overheads, and shareholder returns—have fallen by about 45% since 2015, to roughly US$46 per barrel in 2025. While crude prices remain inherently volatile, that lower cost base has likely contributed to US shale's resilience across price cycles.

The industry's "test, learn, iterate, and scale" cycle has helped propel the United States to become the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas, producing about 50% more than the second-largest player. Reinforcing waves of innovation and discipline have likely accelerated this progress.

First wave: The 2014 to 2016 oil price downturn helped catalyze a wave of innovation in drilling, completion, and acreage management that reshaped shale performance. Average lateral well lengths now exceed 2 miles and can extend up to 5 miles, while improved well spacing and full dual-well stimulation have reduced drilling time and lowered costs per well. Additionally, proppant intensity has reached 5,000 pounds per foot for high-specification wells, while lightweight proppants have improved resource recovery by up to 20%. A result: US oil and gas (O&G) producers are now pumping 13.8 million barrels per day of oil using less than one-third of the active rigs in 2015, roughly four times the output per rig.

Second wave: Progress accelerated as some large O&G companies scaled their shale positions and imposed stricter financial discipline. Since 2020, these companies have acquired US$400 billion in upstream assets, industrialized leading practices, and built integrated capabilities, reducing shale's supply elasticity to price swings. For instance, a US$5-per-barrel monthly change in oil prices corresponded to a roughly 17% change in rig activity in the 2015 to 2017 period; now it is less than 2%. "Best-for-capital" decisions to meet their growing shareholder commitments also contributed to the reduction of the industry's activity in low-quality wells.

Despite this progress, many US O&G companies still compete from a higher cost base. Full-cycle breakevens remain US$8 to US$10 per barrel higher than those of low-cost global competitors (figure 1). The time has therefore come for US O&G companies to continue building on the progress so far, especially as market uncertainty is expected to continue with oil prices reaching US$120 per barrel as of early March 2026, and as energy affordability and supplier resilience once again come into focus.

Igniting a new wave

Upcoming challenge: Risk of breakeven costs rising amid flat-to-lower oil and gas prices, impacting competitiveness

Cost and tariff headwinds are mounting—upstream costs are slated to rise by 4% to 20—while the structural weakness in oil markets (absent conflicts and supply disruptions) may persist. Against this backdrop, a third, digital-led innovation cycle could help accelerate performance gains and reduce the breakeven gap with low-cost global counterparts

Unlocking the Next Wave of Innovation in US Shale, Deloitte

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(figure 2). This third wave of innovation should consider three aspects.

Infrastructure activation: Rebuilding exploration capability and monetizing the broader midstream infrastructure build-out

System optimization: Leveraging smart, connected operations to reduce operating expenditure (opex) and lift netback

Workforce amplification: Prioritizing scalable, field-first use cases that can be deployed quickly

Infrastructure activation

Opportunity: Potentially reduce breakeven costs by US$1.5 to US$1.75 per barrel

By enhancing exploration's digital capability and strengthening end-to-end reliability across the infrastructure buildout, the industry could potentially realize savings of up to US$1.75 per barrel. Maintaining a balance between production and midstream takeaway capacity could help keep the system well-supplied and dependable.

Digital-led exploration growth: Exploration spend as a share of US upstream spend has fallen by 50% to US$10 billion. However, rebuilding exploration muscle may not be able to follow older strategies that leaned on classic wildcatting, geoscience-led sweet-spotting, acreage shape and contiguity, and static decline-curve assumptions. Instead, exploration should include a digital backbone as much as geoscience: integrated subsurface-to-surface data for better prospect ranking; analytics and AI to continuously recalibrate decline curves and operational constraints (for example, water, power, and infrastructure); and data-powered workflows that improve capital allocation and repeatability. AI and machine learning can help accelerate seismic analysis from months to weeks, while improving seismic interpretation quality by up to 40%, increasing effectiveness by US$0.15 to US$0.25 per barrel of exploration capex.

Capitalizing integrated infrastructure expansion: Midstream capex, which directly supports the growth of upstream operators and downstream refiners, has seen its share of total US O&G capex nearly double since 2015.

The midstream buildout has enabled a reduction in natural gas flaring and venting, which equates to roughly US$0.4 per barrel on a gross value basis. Similarly, an optimal and connected midstream buildout around the Permian Basin, relieving Waha congestion, could bring roughly US$0.9 to US$1 per barrel in value lift when spread across total US crude output.

Realizing and sustaining this value should include treating the midstream buildout as a flexible, data-enabled platform that can improve flow assurance, monitor and manage key constraints, and enable deeper risk-based inspection and maintenance.

Trump Grants 90-day Jones Act Waiver Extension to Curb Energy Costs, Reuters

President Donald Trump granted a 90-day extension to a shipping waiver that makes it easier to move oil, fuel and fertilizer around the United States, the White House said, the latest effort to curb rising energy costs linked to the war with Iran.

The decision adds roughly three months to the existing waiver that was set to expire on May 17, enabling foreign-flagged vessels to move commodities between U.S. ports through mid-August.

White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers confirmed that Trump had issued the extension.

"This waiver extension provides both certainty and stability for the U.S. and global economies," Rogers said.

The Jones Act has long been a flashpoint between competing economic and national security priorities. Supporters, including U.S. shipbuilders, maritime unions and some lawmakers, argue the law is critical to maintaining a domestic shipping industry and merchant marine that can support military logistics and national security.

But critics — including energy producers, refiners and agricultural groups — say the requirement to use U.S.-built and -crewed vessels sharply raises shipping costs and limits capacity, particularly during disruptions, driving up prices for fuel and other goods.

Iran War to Keep Gas Market Tight for Two More Years, IEA says, Bloomberg

The global natural gas market is set to remain tight well beyond this year, as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and damage to regional infrastructure continue to disrupt supply, IEA says.

The global natural gas market is set to remain tight well beyond this year, as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and damage to regional infrastructure continue to disrupt supply, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

In a report published, the IEA said the war has delayed a long-anticipated glut in liquefied natural gas, even as new capacity comes online. The impact of that expansion — driven largely by the US — is being pushed back "by at least two years".

The outlook aligns with a warning from Vitol Group earlier, which said global supply could be impacted through 2028. The energy trader cited the recent damage to LNG facilities in Qatar and delays to new projects across the Middle East.

Now in its second month, the conflict shows no signs of easing, effectively choking off around a fifth of global oil and LNG supply. Qatar has said Iranian strikes recently damaged about 17% of its liquefaction capacity, with repairs potentially taking as long as five years.

The combined impact of near-term supply losses and slower capacity growth could result in a cumulative shortfall of around 120 billion cubic meters of LNG between 2026 and 2030, the IEA said. This estimate includes delays to Qatar's North Field East expansion project.

For now, demand has softened in key importing markets in response to higher prices, milder weather, and policy efforts to curb consumption. Several Asian countries are turning to fuel switching and demand-side measures to limit gas use amid the supply crunch.

"Demand response will be key to balancing the global gas market," the IEA said.

Texas Oil Pipes Are Running All-Out to Supply War-Driven Overseas Demand, Bloomberg

Texas oil pipelines are running above designed capacity in some cases amid rampant overseas demand for US crude to replace cargoes stranded by the Iran war.

Pipeline flows from the Permian Basin to Gulf Coast export terminals have climbed to an all-time high, according to research firm Wood Mackenzie Ltd.

Recently, the volume of crude pumped through those networks rose by 1.5% to a daily average of 5.27 million barrels, Wood Mackenzie figures showed. On one system that feeds oil to Corpus Christi exporters, the pipes have been running at 102% of nameplate capacity, an indication that shippers are pushing the bounds to deliver as much oil as possible.

“With strong export demand being one of the main drivers, Corpus Christi-bound flows have unsurprisingly been exceptionally strong,” said Lee Williams, a senior research analyst at Wood Mackenzie.

One knock-on effect of the surge in foreign demand has been a draw-down on domestic crude stockpiles.

The amount of oil held in storage at the key US hub in Cushing, Oklahoma, shrank by 1.7 million barrels in the most recent government data, the steepest drop since the start of 2025.

US exports of crude and refined products such as gasoline have never been higher, and along the Gulf Coast, outbound shipments of oil are set to touch a new record in May.

The unprecedented foreign pull on US supplies could start to pinch the home-grown energy landscape as domestic fuelmakers increasingly find themselves competing with overseas refiners for barrels.

For consumers, such a supply scenario couldn’t come at a worse time, given the imminent approach of the summer driving season.

Oil “flows along all major long-haul systems are essentially full,” Williams said.

API, Farm Groups Urge Congress to Back Year-Long E15 Sales as Prices Rise, Reuters

Groups representing ethanol producers, farmers, and fuel retailers urged Congress to allow gas stations to sell higher-ethanol gasoline blends year-round to combat the higher pump prices that have persisted since the start of the war in Iran.

The groups are supporting an amendment to the omnibus Farm Bill that would allow, but not require, fuel retailers to offer gasoline that contains 15% ethanol for sale nationwide on a year-round basis. That blend, known as E15, is typically barred during summer months due to smog concerns, though the Trump Administration has temporarily waived that restriction to try to bring down the cost of retail gasoline that has surged to more than $4 a gallon, a pain point for low- and middle-income consumers.

The amendment was submitted to the House Committee on Rules by a group of more than 20 lawmakers, led by Representative Michelle Fischbach, a Republican from Minnesota. That committee is set to consider the legislation soon as part of the Farm Bill, the most important piece of agricultural legislation that is brought up every five years.

The Environmental Protection Agency, using emergency waivers, has allowed fuel retailers to sell E15 since late March. Prices have steadily marched higher due to a global energy supply crunch caused by Iran's effective blockade of the crucial Strait of Hormuz following U.S.-Israeli strikes on that nation, with retail U.S. gasoline surpassing $4 a gallon in early April.

Recently, the average price nationwide was $4.06 per gallon. With gasoline futures continuing to rise, motorists could feel more pain in coming weeks. E15 is typically cheaper than conventional gasoline because ethanol usually costs less than petroleum blendstock.

“Maintaining access to E15 year-round empowers consumers at the pump with more options, particularly during periods of tight supply and high fuel costs, while allowing refiners and retailers to meet the demands of the market,” the organizations including the American Petroleum Institute, the National Association of Convenience Stores and the National Corn Growers Association wrote in a letter addressed to members of Congress.

President Donald Trump has previously said he supports year-round E15 sales and would sign legislation approving them without delay.

Jake Barron, communications director at biofuels group Growth Energy, said year-round E15 sales could save consumers up to 30 cents a gallon.

Refining industry groups, including the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, have opposed the move citing additional compliance costs.

The White House has tried various moves to limit the economic fallout of the surge in global oil prices, including a large release of U.S. emergency crude stockpiles and the extension of a 90-day shipping waiver to ease transport of oil, fuel and fertilizer.

Government Affairs Update

Both chambers of Congress are scheduled to be out of session next week, as several major legislative issues remain unresolved.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has now gone 73 days without enacted funding. The administration has indicated that it may not be able to continue paying DHS employees beyond the end of the month without congressional action. In the House, some Republican members, including those aligned with the Freedom Caucus, have stated they will not support the Senate-passed fiscal year 2026 DHS appropriations measure until there is further progress on a separate budget reconciliation bill focused on immigration enforcement funding.

House Speaker Mike Johnson has suggested that advancing the Senate's fiscal year 2027 budget resolution could demonstrate sufficient momentum to move the appropriations bill forward. Recent events, including an incident at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, may add to the urgency surrounding DHS funding.

Meanwhile, the Senate has begun work on what is being referred to as a second phase of reconciliation. The Senate Budget Committee released its fiscal year 2027 budget resolution, which directs the Homeland Security and Judiciary Committees to propose legislative changes that could increase the deficit by up to $70 billion over ten years. These changes are expected to include funding for immigration enforcement agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Senate approved the budget resolution by a 50–48 vote following extended debate and a series of amendment votes. Two Republican senators voted against the measure, and two senators did not vote. The chamber adopted one amendment establishing deficit-neutral funding for the apprehension and deportation of individuals convicted of serious crimes, while rejecting several others addressing a range of policy issues, including healthcare costs, housing affordability, insurance practices, federal spending priorities, election requirements, and Medicaid funding restrictions.

If the House adopts the same budget resolution, committees will begin drafting reconciliation legislation. Any differences between House and Senate versions could require additional Senate consideration.

House Republican leadership is also preparing a framework for a potential third reconciliation bill, with the stated goal of keeping the current effort limited in scope while signaling plans for additional tax and spending measures later in the year.

On appropriations for fiscal year 2027, House appropriators have approved initial funding allocations for six of the twelve annual spending bills. These allocations serve as preliminary guidelines and may change during negotiations. Funding levels for more complex areas, including defense and health programs, have not yet been released. House Appropriations Committee leadership has expressed a goal of advancing all twelve bills by early July, though prospects for Senate passage remain uncertain.

In addition, House Republicans are making another attempt to extend surveillance authorities under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act before they expire later this week. A revised proposal includes additional oversight provisions and penalties for misuse but does not incorporate certain provisions sought by some members.

Democratic leadership has indicated that they were not involved in drafting the latest version and may not support it, although some individual Democrats have backed extending the authority. If the House is unable to pass a measure, the Senate is prepared to consider its own version.

On foreign policy, Senate Republicans blocked consideration of a resolution related to U.S. involvement in the Iran conflict. The procedural vote saw limited bipartisan crossover. In the House, Democrats may attempt to bring forward a similar resolution as the conflict reaches the 60-day mark.

Recent changes in House membership have slightly altered party ratios. Following one resignation and the death of another member, the chamber now stands at 218 Republicans and 212 Democrats, giving Republicans a narrow majority.

This week, the House is expected to consider several measures, including the surveillance reauthorization bill, the Senate budget resolution, a farm bill, and education-related legislation. Additional bills will be taken up under expedited procedures, addressing topics such as tax administration, disaster relief, child support enforcement, and intellectual property protections. The Senate's schedule will focus primarily on confirming administration nominees, while also remaining prepared to act on surveillance legislation if necessary.

OPINION: Why Pausing is Such an Important Leadership Skill, and How to Do It, Chatsworth Consulting Firm

As an Executive Coach, I get to work with many powerful, successful leaders, and many of them have a habit that's getting in their way.

They're reacting too quickly, and not reacting Thoughtfully.

Their colleagues will say:

"I ask him a question, and his immediate response is emotional and defensive."

"I can hear her yelling in her office."

"I wish he'd read his emails before he sends them. The tone. It's off-putting."

We all have too much going on and too much to do, and that overwhelm and need for constant action seems to be causing an epidemic of hot-blooded responses that are getting in the way.

We need to pause.

We need to pause and think through how we want to respond. We need to reflect on the bigger picture – what might matter to the other person, what their perspectives might be, what stories about them (and the situation) we might be making up, what is our ultimate goal and what is the best way to get there.

Taking a moment, or a few days, to consider a different way to view the issue at hand can help us respond more calmly and productively.

We need to pause and take a deep breath, to let ourselves calm down if we've been triggered. I've very rarely seen a knee-jerk reaction that has helped a situation or remedied a problem. When our buttons have been pushed – when we've shot into anger or fear or any other negative emotion – we need time to compose ourselves.

Jill Bolte Taylor, in her book My Stroke of Insight, writes about the ninety-second rule – that when we are provoked, our adrenaline rush kicks in and we have no control over our actions

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and reactions…for ninety seconds. Only ninety seconds. After that, we can take a breath and choose what we want to do and how we want to respond. We therefore need to pause for at least ninety seconds to get past a habit of knee-jerk reactions.

So how do we build this pause into our life and work? How have my clients successfully learned to do this? The method is simple, but potentially challenging:

Become aware that you, at least at times, react too quickly

Decide that you're going to learn to pause – for ninety seconds, five minutes, a day, a week

Build a support network to lean on and remind you to practice this new behavior

Practice this new behavior, especially when you're most emotional or triggered (except in the rare cases of true crises)

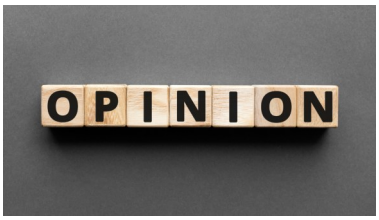
Practice this new behavior some more

Notice and reward your successes (and your attempts, even if they don't succeed)

Keep at it

I've learned to (often) do this myself – to step away when I've most wanted to step in, to breathe when I've most wanted to shout or scream. I've witnessed others build those muscles – not responding to an inappropriate email but instead taking time to calm down, and then calling the other party instead of responding via email and successfully talking things through. I've heard the feedback of changed behavior – the "wow, now when I approach him with something, I can see an initial reaction, a pause and then a well-thought out response that has helped us solve the issue."

Many of us need to pause more often before we react too harshly, and all of us can learn to do it. One breath at a time.



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