

# Roth: Major fuel savings for taxpayers with CNG

THE JOURNAL RECORD

Republican Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin and Democratic Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper have forged a powerful partnership advocating an energy-independent America, by way of your car. Fallin and Hickenlooper have reminded us that the United States is the world leader in natural gas production, but we rank 16th in the world when it comes to using compressed natural gas, or CNG, in our automobiles. This tragically puts us behind places like Bangladesh, Argentina, and even Iran. Together, Fallin and Hickenlooper have been articulating the cost savings available to consumers by way of using CNG as the fuel for our vehicles. There are many other obvious benefits that come from increased consumption of CNG, such as energy independence and a significant reduction of harmful pollutants being exhausted into the air. Together, their leadership is urging for states to pave a way for increased CNG usage, and calls upon the federal government for significant action on its own use.

And now, there is even more good news. A recent report by the American Clean Skies Foundation reveals that the federal government can lead the way as Fallin and Hickenlooper are urging, and save taxpayers \$25 billion! In this era of budget deficits and tax policy debates, this is a no-brainer win-win for our taxpayers and American energy industries. Here's how: Switching 20 percent of the U.S. government's business freight and package carriers to using alternative fuels will save taxpayers \$7 billion annually and about \$25 billion by the year 2025. How? The answer is simple: reduced fuel costs. Alternative fuels like CNG are much, much cheaper than any

petroleum-based alternative. To create some context, according to the report in 2011 the federal government owned or leased about 660,000 cars and trucks, costing us about \$1.6 billion on 400 million gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel. But that's not where the real cost savings can be felt. Contrast that with the upward of \$50 billion spent directly on procuring transportation by private-sector trucking companies and carriers. In other words, all of the contracts the federal government uses on transportation via trucking is incredibly expensive. Instead of reimbursing those shippers for the cost of gasoline (much of which is from foreign nations), if we begin to reimburse them for the cost of alternative fuels like American CNG, we can save some major dollars. This shift in fuel choice and greater fuel efficiency is not just about leadership; it is about changing the management of fleets common to both government and private transportation service contracts, for every year going forward. The benefits are clear. This kind of shift could reduce oil imports by billions of gallons annually, cut greenhouse gas, or GHG, pollution by more than 20 million metric tons a year, and stimulate the nationwide introduction of tens of thousands of new alternative-fuel vehicles. Now, that is some unconventional common sense that both political parties' conventions and leaders should embrace. *Jim Roth, a former Oklahoma corporation commissioner, is an attorney with Phillips Murrah P.C. in Oklahoma City, where his practice focuses on clean, green energy for Oklahoma.*