



NEWS

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Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Calls West Africa A Strategic but Underutilized Partner in Quest for U.S. Energy Security

*U.S. policy in West Africa should connect energy security to other important
governance, infrastructure development, and poverty reduction goals*

Washington, DC— As gas prices continue to skyrocket, the debate over how to address America’s energy crisis has intensified among policymakers, analysts, and other key opinion leaders. Simultaneously, the U.S. faces increased international pressure to provide more aid, fair trade, and debt relief assistance to Sub-Saharan African countries.

A new study by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) entitled, “Breaking the Oil Syndrome: Responsible Hydrocarbon Development in West Africa,” argues that the U.S. must link these seemingly disparate concerns by forming a strategic alliance with West African hydrocarbon states that can help secure U.S. energy needs while advancing human and infrastructure development goals in West Africa.

“The fact of the matter is that West Africa is vital to the energy security of the United States,” said Dr. Don Tharpe, President and CEO of CBCF. “The region is poised to increase the world supply of oil but it has been largely overlooked as a key U.S. partner in this regard.”

“Changing global geopolitical dynamics have once again increased U.S. interest in Africa and its natural resources. Yet, it will not be enough to conduct business as usual in West Africa,” said Dr. Maya Rockey Moore, former CBCF Vice President of Research and Programs. “The U.S. must embark upon a mutually beneficial alliance that increases U.S. energy security while promoting sustainable development in African oil-producing countries.”

The paper highlights that a mutually beneficial dynamic engagement framework will be especially important as the demand and competition for scarce oil resources increases in countries like China and India.

According to Paul Michael Wihbey, the lead author of the study and President of Global Water and Energy Strategy Team, “This report makes recommendations that could have significant implications for U.S. energy security over the short and long terms,” Wihbey says. “The U.S. has a very important opportunity at this critical juncture in world history. The country could benefit tremendously if it recognizes that good governance, infrastructure, and human development goals are keys to the security and sustainability of oil-exports from West African hydrocarbon states.”

The CBCF maintains that investment in alternative, non-carbon energy sources represents the greatest possibility for reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil sources. Yet the Foundation recognizes that it will take time to develop mass technologies that utilize alternative energy sources across the various carbon-dependent industries. While it is important to support the development and application of non-carbon energy sources, in the meantime, it remains vitally important to diversify how and where the U.S. imports its oil.

The paper will be released to the public on Tuesday, July 19, 2005 at 9:30 a.m. in the Members Room of the Library of Congress (Jefferson Building). The forum will be hosted by Congressman William J. Jefferson, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and will feature Members of Congress, subject matter experts, key Bush Administration officials, private sector participants, and members of the African Diplomatic Corps.

The CBCF, established in 1976, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy, research and educational institute focused on leadership education, public health, economic development, and African globalism.

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