**For Release Wednesday, February 7, 2024**

**Capitol View**

**Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

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**Ricketts and Pillen on Right Side in Electric Vehicle Debate**

Full Disclosure: My wife and I drive a four-year-old hybrid sedan. It runs on the electric motor up to 15 miles -per- hour before the gasoline engine engages. It feels and sounds like it’s dead at stop signs. It averages 44 miles-per-gallon in highway driving. But it’s a hybrid, not an all- electric vehicle.

U.S. Senator Pete Ricketts has vowed to use every tool he has to fight President Joe Biden’s electric vehicle mandates. Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen has signed a letter to Biden as one of 16 Governors also opposed to the mandate that two out of every three vehicles be battery electrics by 2032.

Ricketts and Pillen and the other 15 governors are all Republicans, but I don’t consider politics as the driving factor here. It’s something as laudable as saying consumers and the marketplace should guide growth for electric vehicles. It’s something as practical as Nebraska’s recent cold snap and the lack of recharging infrastructure.  
 Ricketts said the failure of electric vehicles and chargers in the recent winter storms and subzero temperatures in Nebraska are a concern. He said the Biden Administration needs to realize the Midwest has different driving needs than the east and west coasts. He has vowed to fight “this foolish policy” until it is rescinded.  
 The Pillen, et al letter said “There are a number of reasons why consumers are leaving these cars on dealership lots – the cost, the infrastructure required, and the battery content requirements are untenable for today’s car buyers. Even if consumers determine over time that battery electric vehicles are appealing, the reality is that the lack of a strong, domestic

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marketplace makes electric vehicles prohibitively expensive for the American consumer.  
 “While battery electric vehicles are a promising technology, we believe it will take time to develop the marketplace, to address consumer access and concerns, and to build out the necessary infrastructure.”

Instead of using government mandates to drive the vehicle market,” the Governors said, “American consumers should be allowed choice in the types of vehicles they choose to drive. While we are not opposed to the electric vehicle marketplace, we do have concerns with federal government mandates that penalize retailers and do not reflect the will of the consumer. Even with deep price cuts, manufacturers’ incentives, and generous government funding, federal mandates on electric vehicles are unrealistic.   
 “Your mandates are unrealistic, costly, and prescriptive solutions that harm American consumers. Therefore, we request you remove your mandate that two out of every three vehicles be electric and instead provide a more realistic approach by allowing the free market to determine the direction and timing for the industry’s growth rather than the federal government. Let American consumers decide for themselves,” the letter said.  
 Back to the practical side, there needs to be the necessary infrastructure to support battery electric vehicles, including grid capacity and reliability, charging stations, and domestic electric vehicle battery production. China currently accounts for 70% of global electric vehicle battery production capacity.   
 Bolstering the domestic critical minerals industry is an essential step to realizing any long-term, responsible electric vehicle battery production. Given China’s current action atop the global electric vehicle production, mandating electric vehicle use too quickly can also present a national security risk.

In the USA, the average electric vehicle is probably a Tesla Model 3, based on sales volume. The average power outlet in this country is 40% clean power. Figuring one would need 75 kWh to charge an empty Model 3, 40 percent would come from clean energy sources and 60% from fossil fuel which uses energy to mine and produce.

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Governors from Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Wyoming signed the letter.  
 It’s encouraging to know that Pillen and Ricketts can do the right thing on occasion. Look for other areas where you can be this wise. Please.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years*.