

Congress Leasing Gas-Guzzlers

August 8, 2008

by Andy Pierrotti of WSPA News Channel 7

While congress debates how to reduce our dependence of foreign oil, News Channel 7 found many U.S. Representatives driving gas-guzzling vehicles on your dime. Some of them are from South Carolina. Brad Wyche is always on the move, but he doesn't let his busy schedule as the director of Upstate Forever, impact his passion to conserve the environment and gas. "There's no issue facing our country right now that's more important than energy," Wyche says as he walks away from his hybrid Toyota Prius. While Wyche and others try to conserve, it seems some in congress does not. A review of congressional financial records shows half of all vehicles leased by congressmen with taxpayers' money are gas-guzzling SUVs. South Carolina U.S. Congressman Joe Wilson is one of them. He leases a 2007 Ford Explorer for \$570.00 a month. It only gets 14 miles per gallon. Wilson declined an on-camera interview, but told us he's considering replacing his SUV for a hybrid when his lease expires. To Wilson's credit, he first leased a hybrid Ford Escape, but the lease payments were nearly a thousand dollars. SUV's are not the only vehicles congressmen lease with bad gas mileage. Congressman Jim Clyburn leases a 2007 Lincoln Towncar for \$726 a month. It only gets 15 miles per gallon. Clyburn says he didn't have time to talk on camera too. He told us, "When my lease expires later this year, I will choose a fuel efficient vehicle with low emissions..." Wyche says the damage to taxpayers and the environment is already done, "I'm disappointed to hear that, because we call our representatives in congress to lead for a reason, they are supposed to lead on these very important issues." Even if the congressmen do not want to turn in their gas-guzzlers in for fuel efficient vehicles--too bad. A new law passed in 2005 mandates that members of congress can only lease gas friendly vehicles. South Carolina Congressman Bob Inglis' office says he drives a Ford Focus, and he doesn't lease it through the federal government. Other state lawmakers representing us in Washington, D.C, like Jim DeMint, also do not lease vehicles paid by taxpayers.