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Back to the Basics: 3 Reasons Biofuel Messaging Has Gone Bad

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In the words of Range Fuels CEO, David Aldous, his company along with others, has been negatively affected by “public apathy toward green fuels.”





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Although our country is worried about energy security, is in the worst economic recession in 80 years, and has major environmental concerns, all issues that biofuels can help positively address, biofuels have the least support on the Hill and among consumers in decades.



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How can this be?



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The reason: the biofuels message
has gone bad.



Who is For Biofuels?

- Legislators (both federal & state)
- NCGA, ASA, state & regional ag groups, etc.
- Economists (typically those focused on rural economies in the U.S.)
- Biofuel industry
- Consumers

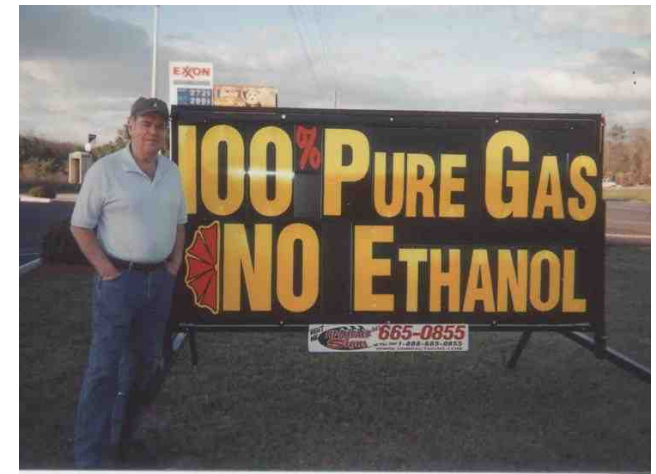


Who is Against Biofuels?

- Legislators (both federal & state)
- Petroleum Industry
- Environmental Groups
- Food Groups & Ag Groups
- Economists & Consumer Tax Groups
- Auto Industry, Small Equipment & Marine
- Consumers



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The Basic Biofuel Message Pillars



- It's good for the economy
- It's good for country
- It's good for the environment



Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Economy

What the biofuel industry says:

- It's good for rural economies
- It's good for consumer pocketbooks
- It keeps money in America and out of the hands of our enemies



The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Economy

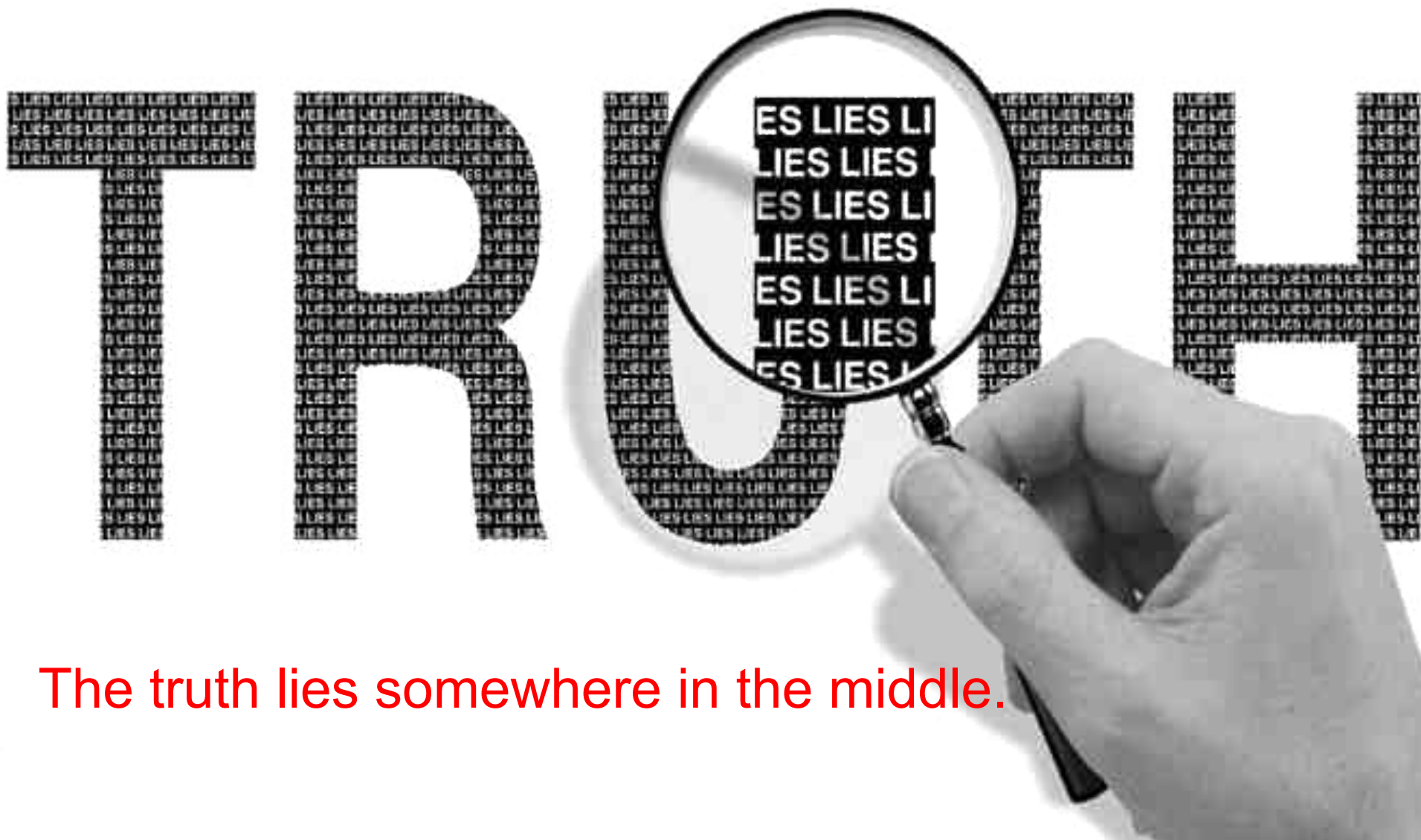
What the opposition says:

- Subsidies are costing Americans too much money
- Ethanol costs American's more money at the pump
- Food versus fuel





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The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Country

What the biofuel industry says:

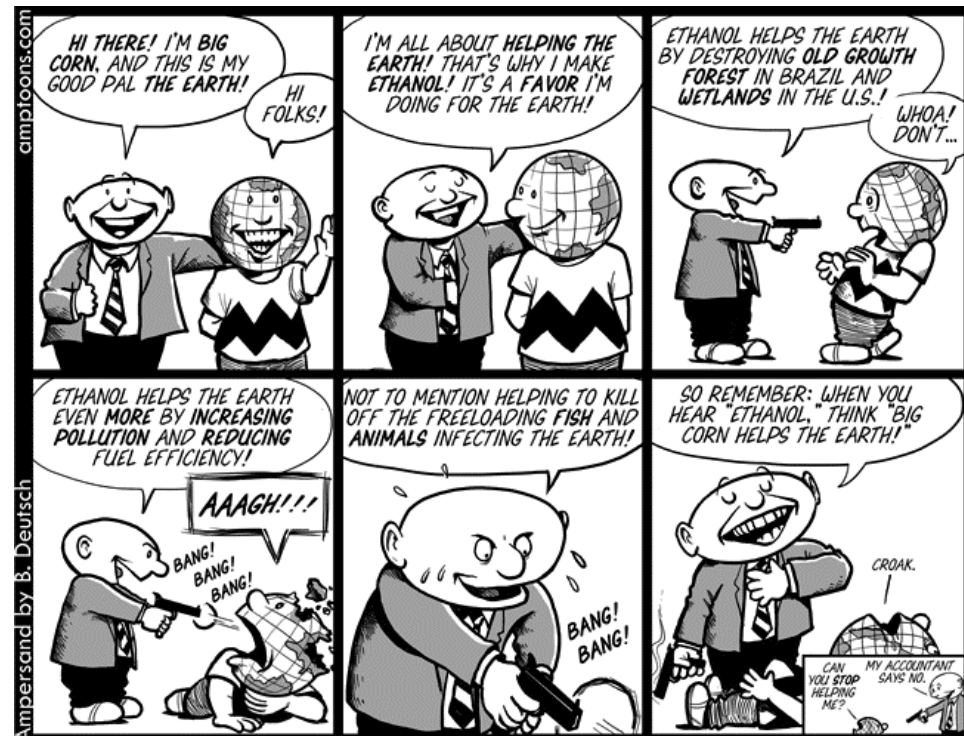
- Creates green jobs
- Reduces our need for foreign sources of energy
- Increases our energy independence
- More biofuel = less oil = less debt = more \$\$ in America = economic security

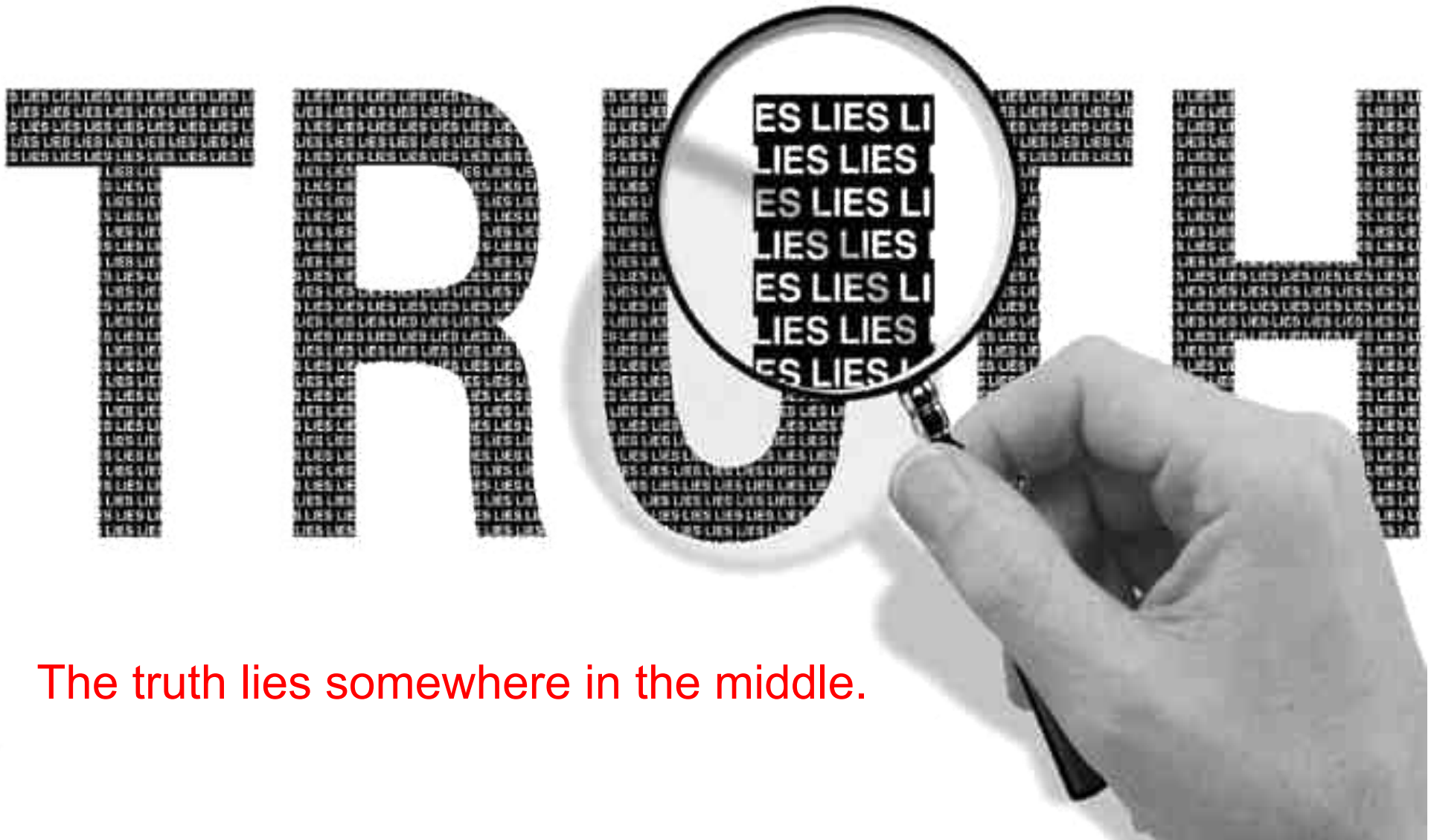


The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Country

What the opposition says:

- Biofuels has a negative EROEI
- America can't be fossil fuel free
- Food versus fuel
- What green jobs?





The truth lies somewhere in the middle.



The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Environment

What the biofuel industry says:

- Biofuels reduce carbon emissions (lifecycle analysis)
- Biofuels reduce tailpipe emissions
- Biofuels use less water
- Biofuels are more sustainable to produce
- With advancements in agriculture, we can produce more with less



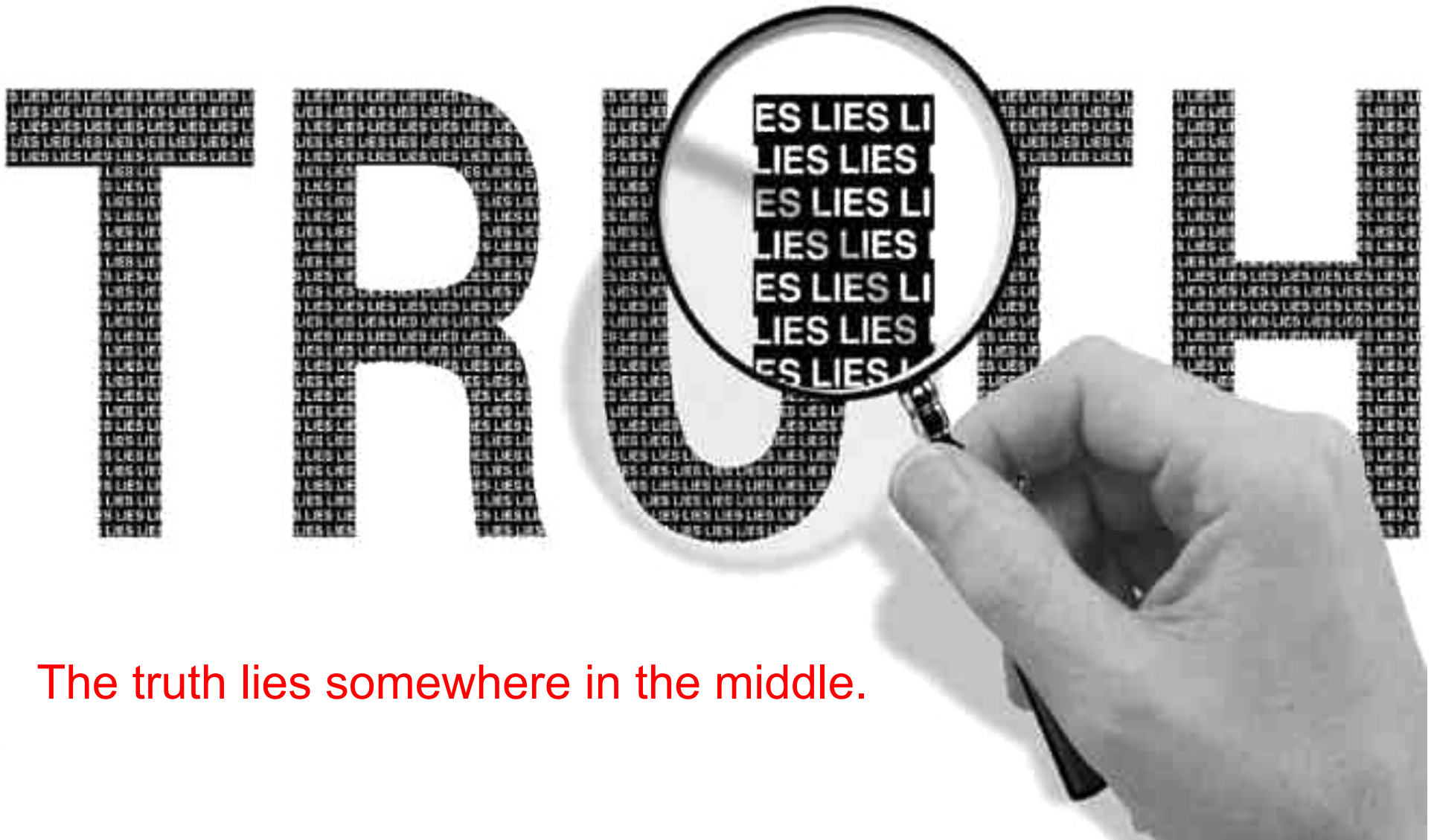


The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Environment

What the opposition says:

- Biofuels create more carbon - indirect land use
- Biogenic emissions
- Soil sustainability
- Dead Zone
- Water
- Ag sustainability
- Land grabbing





The truth lies somewhere in the middle.



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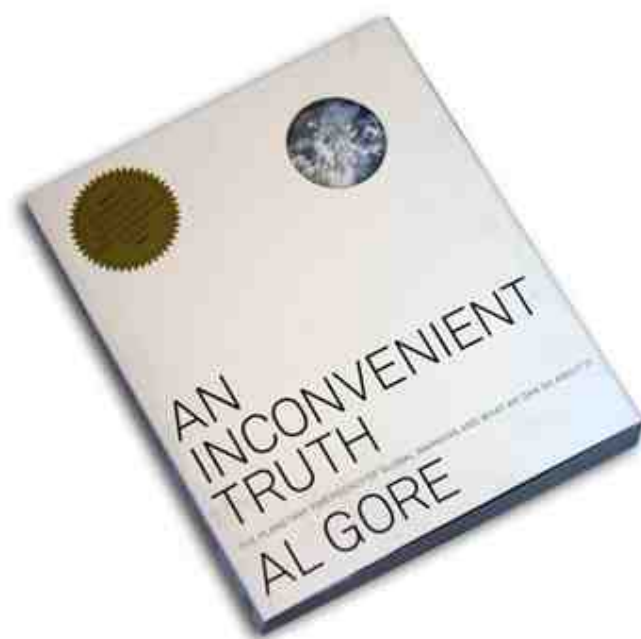
The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Environment

But to find the truth, you need to understand
what consumers currently think about global
warming.





The Biofuel Message Pillar: It's Good for the Environment



Pew Research Poll on Oct. 2010 finds little has changed since 2009. At the height, 79% believed there was evidence of global warming and today its down to 59%.

Today, 34% believe global warming is caused by human activity, compared to 36% in 2009.



Biofuel Message Matrix

Message	Economy	Country	Environment
Postive Net Energy	Red	Yellow	Teal
Good for rural economies			
Saves money at the pump			
Economic Security			
Green Jobs			
No one goes to war over crops	Yellow		
Energy Security			
Energy Independence			
Reduces Carbon			
Reduces Tailpipe Emissions			
Uses Less Water			
Produced Sustainably			
Ag advancements produce more with less			

**Note: this list is by no means exhaustive but just an example of messaging that falls into the three basic key messages.*



Opposition Message Matrix

Message	Economy	Country	Environment
Net Energy	Cyan		
Fuel Economy			
Economic Viability			
Global Rebound Effect			
Land Grabbing			
Subsidies		Purple	
Food Versus Fuel			
Green Jobs			
Energy Security			
Energy Independence			
Indirect Land Use			Yellow
Biogenic Emissions			
Soil Sustainability			
Dead Zone			
Water			
Ag Sustainability/inputs/fossil fuel use			

**Note: this list is by no means exhaustive but just an example of messaging that falls into the three basic key messages.*

Who is Ahead in the Media Battle?

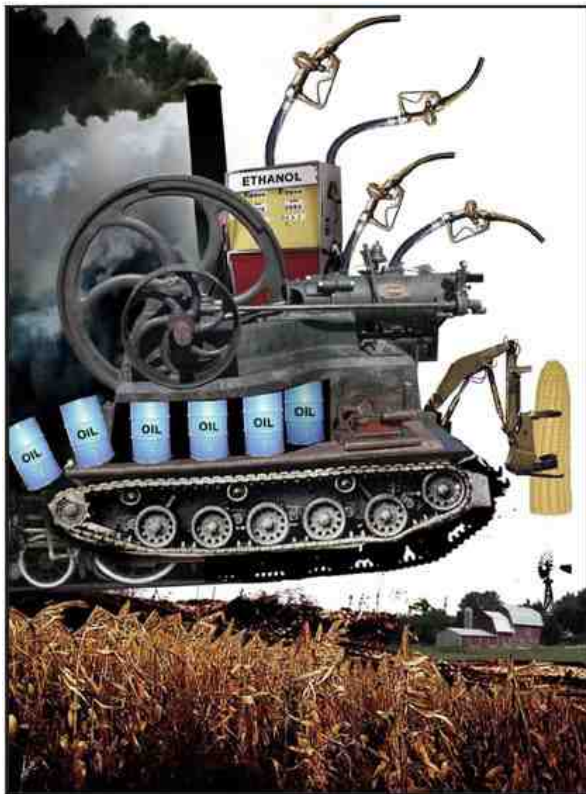


Illustration by Sean Sheerin

Now that you know who is saying what, who is winning the mainstream media message battle?

Who is Ahead in the Media Battle?

Using a scoring method that I developed, I randomly scored 12 articles published in top national newspapers, magazines and political publications over the past three months.





Who is Ahead in the Media Battle?

“Adding an expensive, harmful, useless filler to gasoline just to win farmers' gratitude is not remotely the same as having a legitimate national energy policy.”

*Ed Wallace, “End The Ethanol Insanity,”
Bloomberg Businessweek*





Who is Ahead in the Media Battle?

What is often happening in this battle is “yellow journalism” or one-sided journalism - not stories where both sides are represented.

War, fear, greed, disaster, drama - these are the tools of the yellow journalist.





Who is Ahead in the Media Battle?

The opponents are winning the battle but the biofuel industry has not lost the war.



3 Reasons Biofuel Messaging Has Gone Bad

1. Biofuels issues are complex and being oversimplified.
2. Industry has been astonishingly deaf to criticism, content to fight a “treetops” campaign in Washington.
3. Consumers are going back to the pre-2007 environmental movement.



Three Ways to Change The Message Course

1. Because the issues are complex, need to always talk about “as compared to”.



Three Ways to Change The Message Course

2. Not admitting having a role in a problem, no matter how small, opens you up for attack and puts you on the defensive (food versus fuel, indirect land use, subsidies). Industry must go back on the offensive.



Three Ways to Change The Message Course

3. From an environmental front, the industry needs to go back to its roots as a health solution.





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Q & A





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