SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

VOLUME 37, ISSUE 10 NOVEMBER, 2023

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SSDA-AT Takes Part in WMDA/CAR Legislative Forum

By Roy Littlefield

In October, SSDA-AT took part in WMDA/CAR's Annual Legislative – Industry Issues Forum.

We thank those SSDA-AT members who attended.

The forum focused on issues that affect our industry, trends emerging, good and bad, tools in the box that can help our members, new regulations, and enforcement efforts and legislative issues.

The forum focused on a variety of issues impacting repair facilities, convenience stores and service stations.

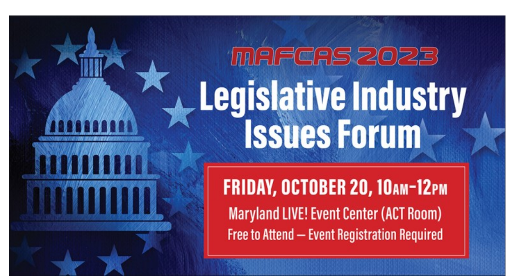
SSDA-AT focused on the Right to Repair efforts on both the state and federal levels.

SSDA-AT has been supporting the REPAIR Act in Congress.

Speakers on the panel included:

Sandi Weaver – WMDA/CAR President, Kirk McCauley – WMDA/CAR, Sandi Weaver, BA Auto Care, Bruce Spenser, Walt Eger's Auto Service, Alison Wilkinson, Chief of Maryland Weights & Measures, Chris Ralston, Administrator MD Oil Control Program, Tom Walter, Chief of Compliance Oil control Program, Chuck Ulm, Director, Field Enforcement Bureau, Patrick Dunkes, Program Manager, Jeffrey Kelly, Executive Director Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis Commission, John Martin, Director of Maryland Lottery & Gaming, James Parsons, Lynott, Lynott & Parsons, P.A., Joe Ocello, CEO NJ Gas & Convenience Association, Roy Littlefield III & Roy Littlefield IV SSDA– AT. Ellen Valentino - Executive Vice President Mid Atlantic Petroleum Distributors, Riaz Ahmad, Past President, WMDA/CAR, Nasir Cheema, Vice President, WMDA/CAR.

Thank you to all those who participated and we look forward to participating again in 2024!



The Online Edge – What Your Business Needs to Thrive

By: Stephanie Santore, Net Driven

Does your business have an online presence? If so, are you doing all you can to ensure its virtual success? If not, what are you waiting for? Let's take a sneak peek at some statistical findings from the Pew Research Center. According to their most recent studies on the use of internet and technology it was found that:

Roughly three-quarters of Americans, or 77%, now own a smartphone, which nearly doubles the former findings since the Center began its research in 2011.

As of November 2016, nearly three-quarters, or 73% of Americans indicate that they have broadband service at home.

Nearly seven-in-ten Americans now use social media. When the Center started tracking social media adoption in 2005, just 5% of Americans said they used these platforms. Today, 69% of U.S. adults are social media users.

Half the public now owns a tablet computer. When the Center first began tracking tablet ownership in 2010, just 3% of Americans owned a tablet of some kind.

As you can see, now more than ever before, an online presence for your business is significant. And not just any online presence, but a quality one that provides a sense of credibility and legitimacy, turning its visitors into leads and sales, and contributing to the success of your business.

First impressions matter. If your business has a website, rest assured that internet users are navigating to it to formulate their opinion, to see what other people have to say about you, and to "screen" shop your services and products, which is much like window shopping, but with the ease of never having to actually visit your business's location.

Your business can now be accessible to the masses thanks to technology. Therefore, it's vital to have a way for potential clients to find you with the swipe of their fingertip and also to ensure you have a website that makes a good impression.

So, how do you go about trying to meet your customers' needs online?

Let's Talk Internet Marketing Best Practices

There are several factors that play into the creation of a well-made website that will help your business's online presence generate traffic and rank effectively:

Design & Layout

Visual presentation plays an important role in the functionality of a website. A high-performing website will provide a positive user experience. It helps to have a responsive web design. What makes a website responsive? Responsive design helps to generate leads and sales without any limitations based on user devices. So, customers can find your automotive service site on their tablet, smartphone, smart watch, etc., viewing your website efficiently from any screen size.

Content

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NET DRIVEN

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Content is the reason why visitors come to a site. They are seeking information about your business and its services. The key is to provide relevant content that is easy for visitors to digest. Too much or too little and your visitors might go elsewhere to find what they're looking for. Check out what Moz has to say about content regarding search engine ranking. By providing unique content that moves beyond self- promotion and is easily digestible to the user, your website offers valuable information.

Calls to Action

Calls to action within a site's content and design come in the form of clickable links or custom buttons. It entices a visitor to take action beyond the page they are on, an action like submitting a form, requesting a quote, purchasing a product, or even just clicking a link that leads to another page with relevant information. Through a CTA, a user moves to take a specific action that will benefit your business. And action is what it's all about.

Credibility

A business with an online footprint is a business that can be found, recognized, and confided in.

From building a solid and consistent brand across all channels, to maintaining an active social media presence, gaining positive reviews, managing your online reputation with products like Net Driven's Reputation Management.

Mobile Viewability

More and more people are looking at your site from a mobile phone or web enabled device. It seems like anything with a screen and a microchip in it is capable of getting on the internet these days.

Make sure your site is viewable on a mobile internet enabled device.

Search Engine Optimization

At Net Driven, we drive the traffic that drives your business! It begins with a website that keeps local search in mind.

A strong SEO foundation puts proven strategies to work and improves your ability to get found.

From understanding searcher behavior to using tested best practices, the SEO team at Net Driven works hard to ensure that your site has all of the key ingredients for SEO success. Look to us for:

Keyword research performed for your business and target geographic

Optimized meta tags for click through success

Relevant industry content

Local directory management

SEO-friendly site architecture

and more!

Don't have a website yet? What are you waiting for?!

Talk to a representative from Net Driven today and ask about how we can help you create a website that not only generates traffic, but turns your traffic into leads and sales!

Net Driven should be your choice for all your automotive internet marketing needs.

Contact us today!

Sources:

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http://www.webs.com/blog/2012/02/28/6-key-elements-to-a-good-website/

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Shareholder Questions if Net-Zero is Feasible for Shell

Shell is targeting net-zero emissions by 2050, but that may have to change if it continues to ramp up liquified natural gas production. "I don't think it's really possible for them to hit the current targets and to do all the things that they've said they're going to do in terms of the way they're going to spend their capex budget," said a top 20 shareholder. Shell is expected to update its energy transition strategy in March.

ExxonMobil to acquire Pioneer in $60B deal

ExxonMobil has announced its acquisition of Pioneer Natural Resources in a landmark $59.5 billion all-stock deal, enhancing its presence in the lucrative Permian Basin and marking the largest purchase since Exxon and Mobil's merger in 1999. With 15% of the basin's output now under Exxon's control, this consolidation signals a potential wave of mergers in the US shale oil industry, which has sought acquisitions as a means to secure prime drilling sites in a changing landscape.

Republicans Urge Biden Admin to Stop Delaying Major Gas Pipeline Project, Fox

A group of House and Senate Republicans penned a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the nation's top energy regulator, asking it to stop slow-walking approval for a key natural gas project in the Pacific Northwest.

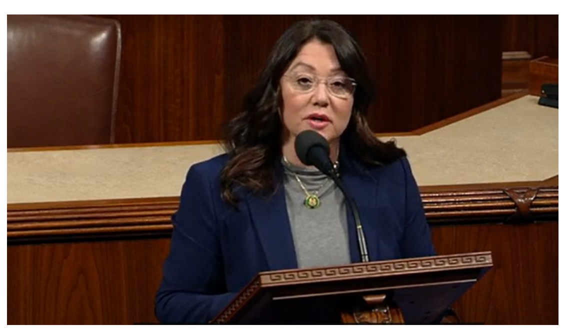
In the letter sent the eight lawmakers — led by Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer, R-Ore., and joined by fellow Oregon GOP Rep. Cliff Bentz, four other House Republicans and Idaho GOP Sens. Mike Crapo and James Risch — called for the immediate approval of the Gas Transmission Northwest XPress Project (GTNXP). The project would upgrade three existing compressor stations, increasing capacity on an existing system that has transported natural gas for decades.

"Further, according to FERC's FEIS (final environmental impact statement) the project would not have significant environmental impacts," they continued. "Regarding GHG (greenhouse gases) emissions more generally, increasing natural gas use in electricity generation has already helped the nation achieve significant reductions in GHG emissions, with electric sector emissions dropping 32% between 2005 and 2019 largely driven by the transition from coal to natural gas."

The letter added that an increase in natural gas power generation would help states like Oregon meet carbon reduction goals, since it relies on coal for about 25% of its electricity generation.

Coal produces greater emissions than natural gas. GTNXP's developer TC Energy first proposed the project in October 2021. According to its application filed with FERC at the time, the project would leverage existing infrastructure to increase GTN's incremental mainline capacity by 150,000 dekatherms per day, enough to power thousands of additional homes in the region. The GTN pipeline travels through Idaho, Washington and Oregon and serves California customers.

However, FERC — which is chaired by Willie Phillips, a President Biden appointee and Democrat — has inexplicably delayed granting final approval for TC Energy to move ahead with construction in the project despite greenlighting in its environmental impact statement published in October 2022. Democrats and environmental groups have urged FERC to reject the project, potentially causing the delays.



BNN: Oil Driller Noble's CEO Says Biden Plan Will Push Rigs Outside US

Noble Corp., the world's biggest offshore oil-rig contractor by market value, expects the Biden administration's new offshore-drilling plan to push new investments out of the US and into other parts of the world.

With as many as 10 deepwater rigs forecast to go back to work throughout the oil industry by the end of next year, Noble's Chief Executive Officer Robert Eifler said he sees Brazil and West Africa leading the world in growth as activity in the US Gulf holds flat.

"If we need the barrels, they're going to get drilled," Eifler said Wednesday in an interview. "If it's not going to be here, it's going to be somewhere else."

Last week, President Joe Biden's administration unveiled plans to hold three auctions for offshore drilling rights over the next five years. The blueprint calls for the fewest number of oil and gas lease sales ever offered in a five-year plan by the US, with Gulf of Mexico auctions in 2025, 2027 and 2029. The schedule of auctions represents the latest attempt by Biden to balance competing climate and energy priorities.

Offshore drillers have struggled over the last decade as the oil companies that hire them turned their focus to lower-cost on-shore projects in US shale basins. Now as shale growth slows, deepwater drilling is enjoying a renaissance, with more than $500 billion in global offshore investments expected through 2025, according to the oilfield services giant SLB.

Eifler, 43, took over as CEO of Noble in May of 2020, months before the drilling contractor filed for bankruptcy. Since emerging from Chapter 11 the following year, the company's shares have more than doubled in value. In July, Noble became the first offshore drilling contractor since 2015 to announce a dividend.

Rate Outlook

Prices to rent the industry's most advanced offshore drilling rigs have already surpassed pre-Covid levels this year, averaging $420,000 a day during the first six months, according to analysts

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BNN: Oil Driller Noble's CEO Says Biden Plan Will Push Rigs Outside US

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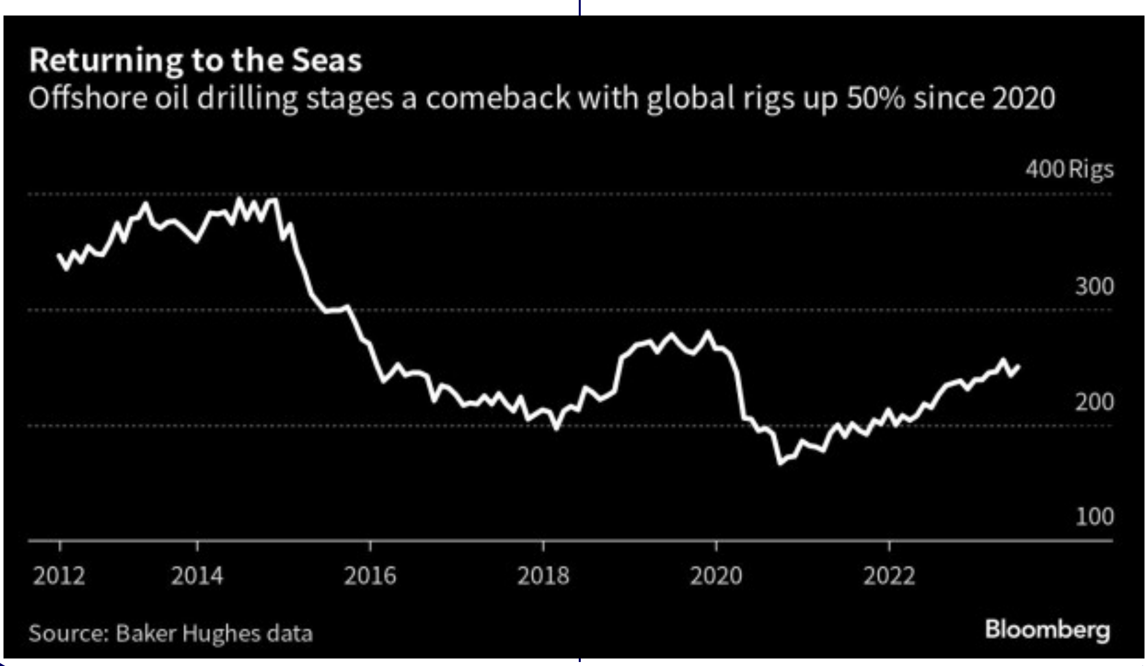
at Wood Mackenzie Ltd. But Eifler said Wednesday the milestone $500,000 average dayrate likely won't hit until next year, delaying what some expected would happen sooner.

Despite rising oil prices, drillers have been cautious about expanding operations, vowing not to build new vessels to replace the ones they scrapped during the downturn. Eifler estimates a new rig today would cost about $850 million, take four years to build and would require a 10-year contract to generate necessary returns.

The tightness in floating rig supply, which Evercore ISI says is now at 87%, has helped boost rig prices and frustrated oil majors including TotalEnergies SE who hire Noble and other drilling contractors.

"We are working hard on the rig strategy today in order to secure lower rig costs," Patrick Pouyanne, Total's chief executive said last week at its investor day. "They prefer to keep some rigs stacked in order to contribute like OPEC control, rather than putting more rigs in the market to see the rates going down."



Biden Administration Cancels Remaining Oil and Gas Leases in Alaska's Arctic Refuge, AP

In an aggressive move that angered Republicans, the Biden administration canceled the seven remaining oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, overturning sales held in the Trump administration's waning days, and proposed stronger protections against development on vast swaths of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The Department of Interior's scrapping of the leases comes after the Biden administration disappointed environmental groups earlier this year by approving the Willow oil project in the petroleum reserve, a massive project by ConocoPhillips Alaska that could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day on Alaska's petroleum-rich North Slope. Protections are proposed for more than 20,000 square miles (51,800 square kilometers) of land in the reserve in the western Arctic.

Some critics who said the approval of Willow flew in the face of Biden's pledges to address climate change lauded Wednesday's announcement. But they said more could be done. Litigation over the approval of the Willow project is pending.

"Alaska is home to many of America's most breathtaking natural wonders and culturally significant areas. As the climate crisis warms the Arctic more than twice as fast as the rest of the world, we have a responsibility to protect this treasured region for all ages," Biden said in a statement.

His actions "meet the urgency of the climate crisis" and will "protect our lands and waters for generations to come," Biden said.

Alaska's Republican governor condemned Biden's moves and threatened to sue. And at least one Democratic lawmaker said the decision could hurt Indigenous communities in an isolated region where oil development is an important economic driver.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who drew criticism for her role in the approval of the Willow project, said Wednesday that "no one will have rights to drill for oil in one of the most sensitive landscapes on earth." However, a 2017 law mandates another lease sale by late 2024. Administration officials said they intend to comply with the law.

The Biden administration also announced proposed rules aimed at providing stronger protections against new leasing and development in portions of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska that are designated as special areas for their wildlife, subsistence, scenic or other values. The proposal still must go through public comment. Willow lies within the reserve but was not expected to be affected by the proposed rules.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's 1.5-million-acre (600,000-hectare) coastal plain, which lies along the Beaufort Sea on Alaska's northeastern edge, is seen as sacred by the Indigenous Gwich'in because it

Biden Administration Cancels Remaining Oil and Gas Leases in Alaska's Arctic Refuge, AP

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is where caribou they rely on migrate and come to give birth. The plain is marked by hills, rivers and small lakes and tundra. Migratory birds and caribou pass through the plain, which provides habitat for wildlife including polar bears and wolves.

Alaska political leaders — including some Democrats — have long pushed to allow oil and gas drilling in the refuge in part because of its economic impact on Indigenous communities in an area with few other jobs. Many of those same voices pressed Biden to approve the Willow project for the same reason.

"I am deeply frustrated by the reversal of these leases in ANWR," said U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, a Democrat, using a common shorthand for the refuge. "This administration showed that it is capable of listening to Alaskans with the approval of the Willow Project, and it is some of those same Inupiat North Slope communities who are most impacted by this decision. I will continue to advocate for them and for Alaska's ability to explore and develop our natural resources."

Alaska's congressional delegation in 2017 succeeded in getting language added to a federal tax law that called for the U.S. government to hold two lease sales in the region by late 2024.

Drilling opponents on Wednesday urged Congress to repeal the leasing provision from the 2017 law and permanently make the coastal plain off limits to drilling.

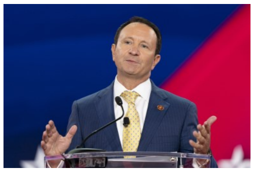
"It is nearly impossible to overstate the importance of today's announcements for Arctic conservation," said Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society. "Once again, the Arctic Refuge is free of oil leases. Our climate is a bit safer and there is renewed hope for permanently protecting one of the last great wild landscapes in America."

Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan denounced Biden's actions as the latest volley in what he called a "war on Alaska."

Two other leases that were issued as part of the first-of-its-kind sale for the refuge in January 2021 were previously given up by the small companies that held them amid legal wrangling and uncertainty over the drilling program.

After taking office, Biden issued an executive order calling for a temporary moratorium on activities related to the leasing program and for the Interior secretary to review the program. Haaland later in 2021 ordered a new environmental review after concluding there were "multiple legal deficiencies" underlying the Trump-era leasing program. Haaland halted activities related to the leasing program pending the new analysis.

The Legal Battle Over Biden's Climate Metric Isn't Over, E&E



The Biden administration may have dodged a blow in its effort to put a price tag on the cost of planet-warming emissions — but the legal fight is far from over.

For years, Republican-led states have tried — and failed — to stop the Biden administration from using interim estimates of the social cost of greenhouse gases that help federal agencies write stronger climate regulations.

One round of their legal battle came to a close after the Supreme Court declined to review a decision that rejected the red states' arguments on the grounds that agencies had not yet used the formulas in rulemaking at the time they filed their challenges.

Lower courts had ruled that the states could not show how they had been harmed. The Supreme Court, as it does in most cases it declines to hear, did not offer a reason for its rejection.

But Missouri or other GOP-led states are expected to return to court as the Biden administration finalizes more rules using the interim social cost estimates. And a new White House proposal to broaden use of the metric by applying it to a wider swath of government decisions is likely to spur another round of litigation.

The estimates highlight the hidden costs of climate change by putting a price on a metric ton of emissions. For carbon, the Biden administration has used estimates of about $51 per metric ton. That figure is consistent with the estimate used under the Obama administration, adjusted for inflation. However, it is a sharp increase from the estimate for carbon used under former President Donald Trump — about $1 per metric ton.

Missouri's petition wasn't the first opportunity for the Supreme Court to weigh in on the social cost metric. The justices previously rejected an emergency plea led by Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, a Republican, to stop the Biden administration from using the new formula. Missouri had followed up with a request for the justices to examine the merits of using the Biden metric.

Opec Sees Higher Oil Demand, for Longer, Argus

Opec secretary general Haitham Al Ghais said "policies and targets for other energies" were faltering "due to costs and a more nuanced understanding of the scale of energy challenges," in the group's latest World Oil Outlook (WOO).

Opec now sees oil demand continuing to grow over the next two decades, reaching 116mn b/d in 2045, from 99.6mn b/d in 2022. And even then it sees a "potential to be even higher."

The latest forecast represents an upwards revision of 6.2mn b/d compared with last year's WOO which had oil demand at 109.8mn b/d in 2045, the same as 2040.

Opec's projections are in stark contrast to those of the IEA which forecast oil demand to peak by 2030 in its medium-term outlook on the oil market back in June.

Opec's forecast reflects the groups belief that oil will play a key role for decades to come, despite growing calls for a ramp down in oil use to help meet climate change goals.

In the medium term, Opec's sees oil demand hitting 110.2mn b/d in 2028, compared with 105mn b/d projected by the IEA. Beyond this, Opec forecasts global demand at 112mn b/d in 2030, 114.4mn b/d in 2035 and 115.4mn b/d in 2040.

The outlook highlights marked differences in oil demand between a developed and developing world. OECD demand grows marginally up to a peak of 46.6mn b/d in 2026 before starting a steady descent from 2028 onwards. By 2045, OECD demand is 9.3mn b/d lower than in 2022.

Opec says this will be mainly driven by energy efficiency improvements and the substitution of oil with electricity and gas. It notes an increased uptake of electric vehicles, the displacement of oil-based heating systems, less oil use in power production and the penetration of alternative fuels in the marine and aviation sectors.

Non-OECD oil demand is expected to grow by 25.7mn b/d between 2022 and 2045, driven by high population growth, an expanding middle class and robust economic growth. While China leads global oil demand growth over the next few years, longer-term India becomes the world's largest single source of incremental demand. By 2045, Indian demand is 6.6mn b/d higher than in 2022, whereas Chinese demand is 3.9mn b/d higher.

More oil investment

Opec sees global liquids supply rising to 106.3mn b/d in 2025 and 116mn b/d in 2045, compared with 100mn b/d in 2022. Opec liquids production is set to grow by 11.9mn b/d to 46.1mn b/d in 2045, with the group's market share rising from 34pc to 40pc.

Non-Opec liquids supply is expected to grow by 7mn b/d to 72.7mn b/d in 2028, but peak shortly after 2030 at around 73.5mn b/d. But by 2045, supply is projected to fall to 69.9mn b/d as the declines from the US and other mature producers, such as Norway, Mexico, Colombia, the UK and China, fail to offset continuing growth from Canada, Guyana, Argentina, Brazil and Kazakhstan.

Opec says that the world needs to invest $14 trillion in the oil sector up to 2045, split between $11 trillion for the upstream, $1.7 trillion for the downstream and $1.2 trillion for the midstream. This is much higher than the $12.1 trillion forecast last year, with the increase mostly driven by the upwards adjustment to demand projections.

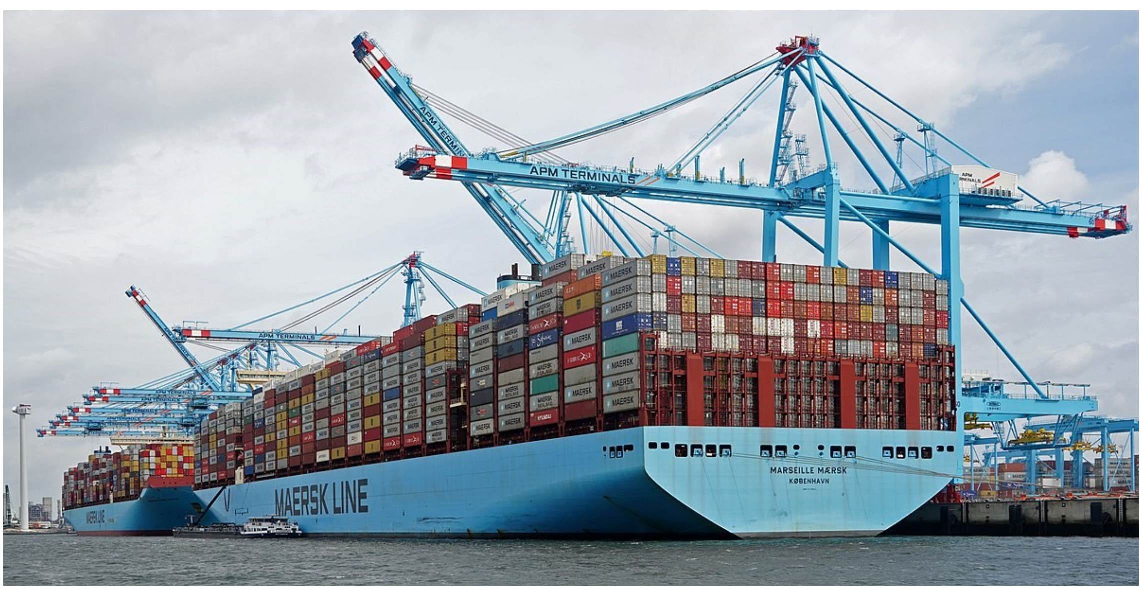
In contrast, the IEA has warned of the "economic and financial risks of major new oil and gas projects," based on its expectations of fossil fuel demand to peak by 2030."Calls to stop investments in new oil projects are misguided and could lead to energy and economic chaos," Opec secretary-general Haitham Al Ghais said.

Opec forecasts energy-related CO_2 emissions to "approach a peak sometime around 2030." In 2045 annual energy related CO_2 emissions are still seen at 34bn tonnes, only 300mn t below 2022 levels.

Ocean Shipping Rates Plummet Amid Declining Demand

Waning consumer demand for goods in the US and Europe is driving ocean shipping rates down by as much as 90% from pandemic highs in early 2022, forcing some operators to put vessels into storage and slash unprofitable sailing schedules.

Pricing may also be driven down further by planned container deliveries that are expected to drive capacity up another 8.3% in 2023 and 8.9% in 2024, according to London-based shipping broker Braemar.



California Governor Signs Climate Disclosure Bills, Business Insurance

California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law two climate bills that require businesses to make significant climate-related disclosures but raised concerns about implementation deadlines and the financial impact on businesses.

In two statements issued accompanying the signed laws, Gov. Newsom instructed the California Air Resources Board to closely monitor the cost impacts and to make recommendations to streamline both programs.

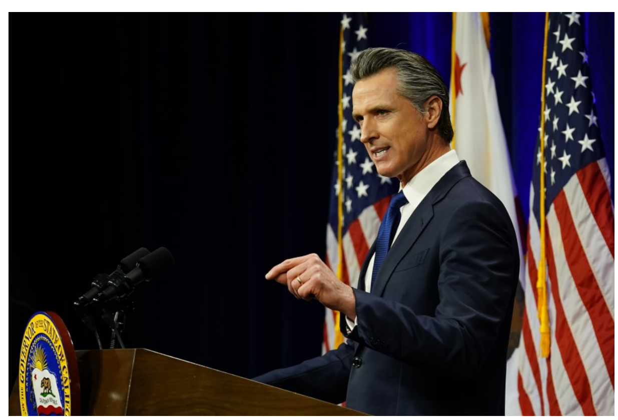
The governor said he looked forward to working with the legislature on these modifications.

The Climate Corporate Data Accountability Act (S.B. 253) requires companies doing business in California with annual revenues of at least $1 billion, to disclose Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions. Annual reporting of Scope 1 and 2 emissions would take effect in 2026, and in 2027 for Scope 3 emissions.

The Climate-Related Financial Risk Act (S.B. 261) requires companies doing business in California with annual revenues of at least $500 million to disclose climate-related risks beginning in 2026.

This policy will illustrate "the real risks of climate change for businesses operating in California and will encourage them to adopt practices that seek to minimize and avoid these risks," Gov. Newsom said in a statement.

Unlike proposed U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission climate disclosure rules, the laws apply to both publicly traded and private companies. Legal challenges are expected, according to experts.



U.S. Crude Oil Exports Reached a Record High in First Half of 2023, EIA

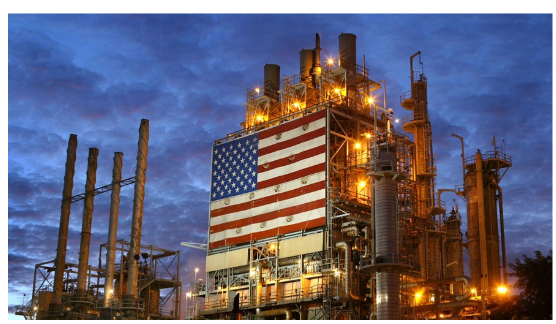
U.S. crude oil exports in the first half of 2023 averaged 3.99 million barrels per day (b/d), which is a record high for the first half of a year since 2015, when the U.S. ban on most crude oil exports from the United States was repealed. In the first half of 2023, crude oil exports were up 650,000 b/d (19%) compared with the first half of 2022.

Europe was the largest regional destination for U.S. crude oil exports by volume, at 1.75 million b/d, led by exports to the Netherlands and UK. Asia was the regional destination with the next-highest volume, at 1.68 million b/d, led by exports to China and South Korea. The United States also exported significantly smaller volumes of crude oil to Canada, Africa, and Central America and South America.

Although exports increased in the first half of 2023, the United States still imports more crude oil than it exports, meaning it remains a net crude oil importer. The United States continues to import crude oil despite rising domestic crude oil production in part because many U.S. refineries are configured to process heavy, sour crude oil (with a low API gravity and high sulfur content) rather than the light, sweet crude oil (with a high API gravity and low sulfur content) typically produced in the United States.

U.S. crude oil imports come primarily from historical trading partners such as Mexico and Canada. Heavy, sour grades of crude oil are often discounted compared with light, sweet grades of crude oil because they require more complex refinery units to produce profitable yields of refined products such as motor gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel. Most U.S. crude oil imports take place when it is more profitable for U.S. refiners to process discounted heavier grades because those refineries have already invested in the additional complexity required to refine them.
The rapid increase in U.S. domestic production in the early 2010s increased domestic light, sweet crude oil production. Light, sweet grades of crude oil traditionally benefit from a price premium in the global crude oil market because they yield high amounts of profitable petroleum products from less complex refining processes.

Some U.S. refiners on the Gulf Coast have invested in expanding their light, sweet crude oil processing capacity. However, for many refiners, particularly in the Midwest and along the Gulf Coast, refining discounted heavy, sour crude oil grades remains more profitable.



Opinion: Wisdom That Wins in Football and in Business

By: Denise Lee Yohn

Business leaders can learn a lot from football.

In this new video, leadership keynote speaker Denise Lee Yohn shares some of her favorite football phrases and how they apply to business. Take, for example, "Look the ball into your hands." This speaks to the importance of follow-through, whether you're playing a game or leading a team.

Video transcript:
With the NFL season in full swing, it's a good time to apply some maxims from football to the business world.

My favorite is the instruction to "look the ball into your hands." In football, this speaks to how receivers need to ensure they make a solid catch. But sometimes, a receiver will be looking at his approaching opponents, pivoting in the other direction or starting to run too quickly, and the ball slips through his fingers. Whether that results in a fumble or a lost down, it's frustrating and completely avoidable.

Businesspeople make the same kind of mistake when they move on to the next thing before seeing the existing one through. Companies launch new products and immediately turn their attention to creating the next new product before ensuring the first one works as it should.

Salespeople may close a difficult sale and then botch the transition to the team who will be managing the account. Managers provide answers to employees' questions and quickly move on without determining if the employees got the help they needed. All these examples show the consequences of poor follow-through: Critical things — like footballs — are likely to slip through the cracks.

Another phrase from football that applies to business leadership is "calling an audible." Quarterbacks call an audible when they change the play at the last minute, usually in response to how they see their opponents' defense lining up. Given the formidable competition and fast pace of change in business today,

Opinion: Wisdom That Wins in Football and in Business

By: Denise Lee Yohn

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companies should allow their people — especially front-line employees — to call audibles as well, whether to veer from their training, bend the rules when appropriate or develop a new solution on the spot.

But calling an audible doesn't mean not having a plan in the first place. And it requires a lot of training, given the split-second thinking, well-honed instincts and calculated risk-taking involved.

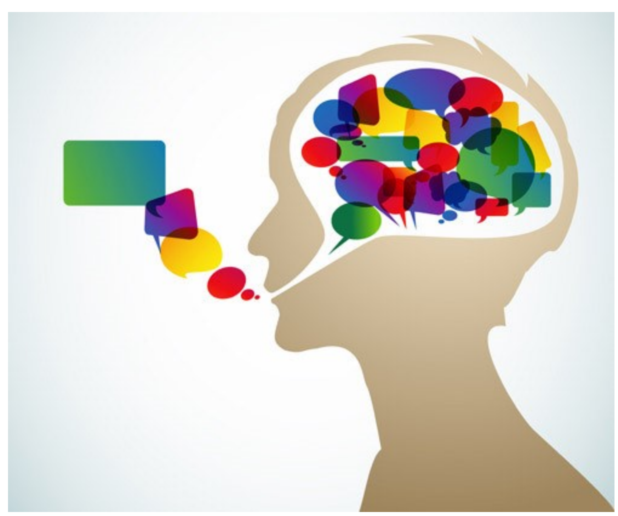
So, leaders should ensure individuals are well-equipped and empowered, and team members are well-attuned to each other so they can easily and quickly respond when a new play is required.

Another great gem from the gridiron is "offense win games, defense win championships." Now, I know this one has become debatable in football, but I think the general principle still applies to business because of the importance of consistency.

You see, just like football teams, a company must be able to excel at least some of the time — whether in product quality, customer engagement or value delivery. Otherwise, it's not a viable business.

But it's the companies that consistently excel in one or more of these areas that have more staying power. Operating with consistency over long periods of time, multiple channels and different customers is hard work and requires steadfast commitment.

But too often, leaders get distracted, tired or simply bored. And that's how football seasons and business cycles are lost.



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