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## Pickens suggests ways to solve energy problems

BY LIANNE HART  
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America should reduce its dependence on imported oil by shifting to natural gas, oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens told a standing-room-only crowd at Rice University Jan. 6.

In a lecture hosted by the Baker Institute Energy Forum, Pickens urged students to join his grassroots campaign and look for their own solutions to "the biggest problem that's ever faced America other than a war."

"You and the generation to come are going to have to figure this out," Pickens said. "And the way you start is to figure out how to use our resources instead of depending on resources from people who are not even friendly to us."

Pickens has embarked on a personal crusade -- a multimillion-dollar effort he calls the Pickens Plan to bring attention to the country's energy woes and his ideas for addressing them.

One of the key elements of the plan is to gradually replace aging fleets of heavy-duty trucks, buses and municipal vehicles that consume disproportionate amounts of imported oil with vehicles that run on natural gas. "The technology is very well-known," Pickens said.

Already, large bus fleets in Beijing, Los Angeles and other major cities are powered by natural gas, Pickens said. Major American automakers sell natural gas-powered cars in Europe and South America, but not in the United States; the only original equipment car in the U.S. that runs on natural gas is the Honda Civic GX, he added.

Vast gas shale reservoirs in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and other places will provide the U.S. with plenty of natural gas to solve this problem, Pickens said.

Natural gas, a finite energy source, can serve as a "bridge" that will give the United States "30 years to make it to the next generation of transportation fuel," Pickens said. Although the U.S. imports almost 70 percent of the oil that it uses, the country uses oil as if it were a major producer, he observed.

Pickens also said he is counting on President-elect Barack Obama to honor a campaign pledge to end oil imports from the Middle East in 10 years.

Pickens, who founded the precursor to Mesa Petroleum in 1956, is currently the founder, chairman and CEO of BP Capital L.P.

His lecture at Rice was co-sponsored by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, the Energy and Environmental Systems Institute, the Richard E. Smalley Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology and the Center for the Study of Environment and Society.



**T. BOONE  
PICKENS**