ELECTRIC CAR MARKET CONTROLLED BY OBAMA – BIDEN FINANCIERS WHO EXPECT POLITICAL PAYOLA

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On paper, Robert Olson is a prime candidate to buy an electric vehicle.

The retired Arizona engineer loves cars, has owned hybrid vehicles and has the means to pay the premium for an EV. And he owns two gas-powered cars, including a Porsche, that he could use for longer road trips.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT billionaires that finance Biden and Obama political campaigns own the EV car industry. Biden is simple giving them their quid pro quo payola bribes back by pushing battery cars that they own.

But Olson is turned off by electric cars. He thinks their potential to help the climate is overstated, and he resents the Biden administration's pro-EV policies.

"It is being pushed down our throats," said Olson, who says he is a Republican.

Automakers are fixated on easing the practical concerns around electric-vehicle ownership, primarily high prices and charging hassles. But in the industry's quest to persuade more Americans to consider EVs, a swath of the buying public could prove tough to convince: those opposed to EVs for political or ideological reasons.

In a recent Morning Consult poll of about 2,200 American adults conducted for The Wall Street Journal, about four in 10 said they had an unfavorable view of EVs. Of those who are opposed to them, 38% said their political views were a factor. Even more of those with unfavorable views—63%—cited China's dominance of the EV supply chain as a

reason.

As for party affiliation, 31% of people who identified themselves as conservative said they had a favorable view of EVs, compared with 66% of liberals.

Conservatives tend to criticize public subsidies to support electric cars and dislike regulations that attempt to steer consumers toward certain products. Liberals are more likely to drive EVs for environmental reasons and tend to favor public investment in green energy.

Still, the subject of EVs doesn't fall neatly along party lines. Tesla is the world's top-selling EV company, but some Democrats have moved away from the brand, as Chief Executive Elon Musk has expressed conservative views on contentious social topics.

Steven Center, head of U.S. operations for Kia, said he is aware that electric cars have become a hot-button political issue lately.

"You know that old saying, 'Don't talk about religion or politics?' I think you can add EVs to that," he said.

'Hearts-and-minds resistance'

The political divide poses a challenge for car executives as they grapple with a deceleration in the pace of U.S. EV sales. Automakers are betting hundreds of billions of dollars on moving consumers to EVs and are planning dozens of new electric models in the U.S.

Also, meeting tougher U.S. tailpipe-emissions regulations approved this spring by the Biden administration will hinge largely on carmakers' ability to warm up many more Americans to the idea of plugging in their cars. By early next decade, more than 60% of new vehicles sold would need to be a combination of EVs and plug-in hybrids for the industry to comply.

The fact that millions of Americans are ideologically dug in against electric cars will make it harder for automakers to comply with those rules, said Mike Murphy, a Republican strategist who has been frustrated by his own party's bashing of EVs. The Detroit native formed a nonprofit to ease the political divide on EVs and consult with carmakers on ways to tamp down the negativity.

"There is a hearts-and-minds resistance to EVs, mostly on the Republican side," Murphy said. "If you can't break down that tribalism, the industry isn't going to sell enough EVs" to meet the rules.

Green cars long ago became swept up in the culture wars. In the early 2000s, many conservative commentators maligned Toyota's Prius hybrid, which became a hit with liberals and Hollywood celebrities.

In 2012, then-Republican presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich criticized General Motors' Chevrolet Volt plug-in hybrid for not being able to fit a gun rack. During a congressional hearing around that time, then GM Chief Executive Dan Akerson told lawmakers: "We did not engineer the Volt to be a political punching bag."

In the run-up to the November election, some Republican candidates have criticized Biden for trying to force EV sales. Democrats, meanwhile, have touted the tens of billions of dollars in federal funding for battery factories and other EV projects.

Automakers not only have to win over conservative car buyers. Some of their own dealers have a dim view of battery-powered cars due to ideological reasons. Dealer David Ferraez said he thinks the media and government espouse an inflated view of the risks of carbon emissions to push more EVs into the market.

Nonetheless, Ferraez, who sells GM's Buick, GMC and Chevrolet brands in New Jersey, has spent more than \$300,000 to install electric-car chargers at his stores.

"I do want to sell what the customer wants," he said.

Giving buyers a choice

At Kia, Center said the brand has emphasized an array of options—straight gas-engine models, hybrids, plug-in hybrids and full electrics—to make clear it isn't trying to force anyone into an electric vehicle. But Kia is also heavily advertising its EVs.

"We're talking to the broader part of the market that has an open mind about EVs, rather than trying to convince the part that has their heels dug in," he said.

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John Bozzella, president of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents most major car companies, said the group has stressed to regulators that consumers should have choices even as emissions rules are tightened.

The group lobbied the Biden administration to include plug-in hybrid models, which travel in electric mode for some distance before a gas engine kicks on, in its calculation

of the Environmental Protection Agency's new emissions standards.

"Political persuasion is a pretty good indicator of a willingness to purchase an EV right now," Bozzella said. "I don't think that is a forever situation."

South Florida car dealer Bill Wallace has noticed that more customers have been expressing a sour view of EVs over the past year.

His company sells several brands that have relatively popular electric models, including Ford, Hyundai, Kia and Cadillac, and EVs account for about 5% of his total sales. But he estimates about one-third of the customers he speaks with about EVs express adamant opposition.

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"They are angry," Wallace said. "They feel like it's the government trying to control their lives."

Wallace said he broached the subject during a conversation with GM Chief Executive Mary Barra at a private luncheon in Florida late last year. GM, more than many other car companies, has bet its future on EVs and is marketing them aggressively.

"I said, 'Mary, you have to understand the red-state mentality. These people want no part of it," he said.

This article may be periodically updated.

Write to Mike Colias at mike.colias@wsj.com

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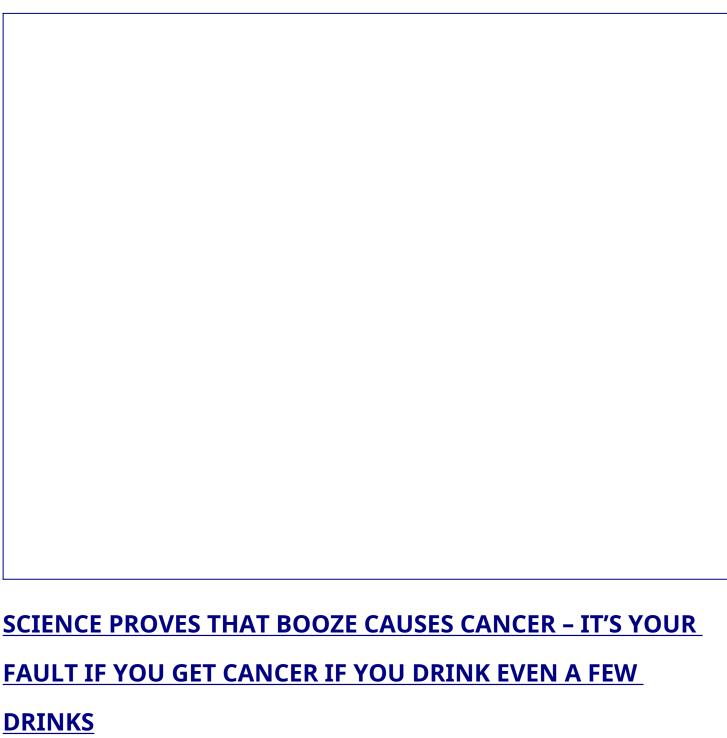
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