

Tariffs needed to 'protect' U.S. oil refiners

Bernie Woodall ~ Reuters

SAN ANTONIO - Just as it has moved to prop up the U.S. steel industry, the Bush administration should protect oil refiners by slapping tariffs on foreign supplies of gasoline and other fuels, William Greehey, Valero Energy Corp. chief executive, said yesterday.

"The U.S. government (should) consider adjusting current import fees to reflect the growing disparities between foreign and domestic refiners created by the embedded costs of environmental compliance," Mr. Greehey told the National Petrochemical & Refiners Association, during the group's annual meeting.

U.S. refiners also need protection as they have to spend billions of dollars to meet gasoline and diesel fuel specifications not imposed in other countries, Mr. Greehey said. Foreign refiners typically sell "dirty" fuels at home and ship the "clean" fuels to U.S. customers, offering the foreign refiners a clear advantage, he said.