



PRESS RELEASE

From the Maine Department of Environmental Protection
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maine reacts to EPA denial of greenhouse gas emissions reductions

(AUGUSTA) – On Wednesday night, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) denied California's waiver to regulate greenhouse gas emissions for cars and light trucks, after waiting two years to make a decision. This is the first time that the EPA has denied waiver requests as part of the California vehicle emissions program after granting over 40 waivers to California over the past 30 years.

Maine, along with 13 other states including six others in the northeast (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont), has taken legal action to opt into the program which adopts California emissions standards, including those for greenhouse gas emissions -- four other states have said they will do so. These states represent a total of approximately 45 percent of the U.S. auto market. Under the federal Clean Air Act, California has the right to implement more stringent motor vehicle standards than federal limits, and other states have the right to adopt the California standards in lieu of the federal standards.

"The federal government should be a partner in states' efforts to curb pollution that ravages the health of our people and our environment," said Governor John Baldacci. "Unfortunately, instead, the Administration in Washington, D.C., has chosen to play the role of obstructionist."

"This decision by the federal EPA undermines many states' efforts to combat climate change," said Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner David Littell. "This is a great disappointment and shows the complete lack of leadership from the President and his Administration on global warming. The EPA is putting up road blocks to states who have moved forward on their own to address global warming in the absence of federal leadership."

Maine's climate change action plan has set a goal of reducing climate altering emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2010, and 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. This goal has also been set by other northeastern states.

The Washington Post reported today that the EPA administrator, Stephen Johnson, overruled the unanimous recommendation of the agency's legal and technical staffs in denying California's petition.

While the EPA claims that the passage of new national fuel economy standards in this week's energy legislation obviates the need for the California greenhouse gas standards, the environmental impact of fuel economy standards and greenhouse gas standards are different. Fuel economy standards by themselves are set with fuel economy and oil savings in mind. Greenhouse gas standards are part of emissions standards which are designed to protect the public health and the environment. Also important is that the new national fuel economy standards, which establish a fleet standard of 35 miles per gallon, do not fully phase in until 2020. The proposed California standard for greenhouse gas emissions begin in 2009 and are fully phased in by 2016. Citing the new CAFE standard does not justify EPA to ignore its own mission set under the Clean Air Act.

The California motor vehicle program has been a world leader in promoting the development of clean vehicle technologies as it has been updated over the years as new technology has developed. In contrast, the federal fuel economy standards have been relatively static for decades, only changing by the rare act of Congress.

"We in Maine will continue to put forth strong, good faith efforts to protect our natural resources and our people," said Governor Baldacci. "We hope that if the federal government does not support outright our efforts, then it will stand aside and allow us to move forward to do what our citizens demand – namely, to limit the harmful gases that are put into the air each year by cars and trucks on our roads."

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