

EPA Sticks Thumb in Eyes of Governors Representing Half of All Americans, Says NRDC

WASHINGTON (Dec. 19, 2007) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today denied California’s request for routine permission to implement its clean cars law (AB 1493). This rejection represents bald-faced political interference with California’s decades-long authority to enforce its own clean air rules, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

Following is a statement by David Doniger, NRDC Climate Center Policy Director:

“The California standards are the single most effective step yet taken in the United States to curb global warming. By blocking the California standards, the administration has stuck a thumb in the eye of 18 governors from both red and blue states who have led the way on global warming by adopting these landmark rules.

“California and the 17 other states have led the way to cut global warming pollution from new automobiles. Their right to do so has been affirmed by three federal court decisions this year, including the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling that carbon dioxide is an air pollutant, just like any other. The new energy law signed by the president today explicitly preserves this Clean Air Act authority.

“The EPA administrator claimed the new energy law sets a standard of 35 miles per gallon and thereby precludes California’s more effective standards. That is just plain wrong. The energy law only sets a fuel economy floor. It requires the administration to set standards of ‘at least 35 miles per gallon,’ expressly giving the administration the power to go farther. And the law expressly preserves California’s authority under the Clean Air Act to set independent, stronger standards to meet the challenge of global warming. Let’s be clear: the California standard is stronger and more effective than the 35-mile-per-gallon floor established in the new energy law.

“EPA Administrator Steven Johnson’s claim that California lacks ‘compelling and extraordinary conditions’ is completely indefensible. California is suffering severe impacts from global warming. Mr. Johnson’s ‘policy preference’ for a different approach is exactly the kind of illegal free-lancing the Supreme Court rejected in its landmark April decision on global warming.”

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The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.2 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing. Visit NRDC at www.nrdc.org.