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Victory for New Mexico's Environment New Mexico 13th State to Adopt Clean Cars Program

News Release

Albuquerque, NM— After two days of joint hearings, the Albuquerque-Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board (AQCB) and Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) voted to adopt Clean Car standards to reduce air pollution and global warming emissions from new cars, trucks and SUVs beginning in Model Year 2011.

“Last night’s decision is a major victory for New Mexico consumers, public health and the environment,” said Environment New Mexico advocate, Lauren Ketcham. “We applaud the members of both boards for adopting these Clean Car standards that will cut toxic air pollution, slash global warming emissions, reduce our dependence on oil and save New Mexico’s drivers money at the pump.”

Directed by Governor Richardson and Albuquerque Mayor Chavez, the New Mexico Environment Department and the Albuquerque Environmental Health Department drafted the Clean Cars regulations. Twenty-three environmental, health, faith, consumer and science groups presented technical testimony in support of the regulations and more than 2000 members of the public provided written and oral comment at the hearings in support of the program.

“The Clean Cars Program is a key part of our state’s effort to reduce global warming emissions to the levels necessary to avoid the worst effects of a warming planet,” said Governor Richardson. “Today’s decision by the EIB means New Mexico along with 12 other states can implement the cleanest standards for vehicle emissions in the country. New Mexico is again taking action, when Washington won’t.”

“I applaud the Board’s decision to take one more step to stop global warming. By bringing cleaner cars and trucks to our roads, we can ensure clean air for future generations. It also provides an economic benefit to everyone by saving money at the gas pump,” said Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a trade association representing ten car and truck manufacturers—BMW, DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Mitsubishi, Porsche, Toyota and Volkswagen—opposed the regulations.

The Clean Cars program, initially started in California under special authority granted through the Clean Air Act, has been adopted by twelve states: Maine, California, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts,

Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington and Oregon. Other states are currently in the process of adopting the standards, including Arizona, Colorado and Florida.

The transportation sector is the second largest source of carbon dioxide pollution in New Mexico, making up nearly one-quarter of the state's emissions in 2000. Global warming, left unchecked, could substantially impact the frequency of heat waves, increase the risk of wildfires in the state and decrease mountain snowpacks and available water supplies.

Cleaner cars can help to reduce the state's global warming and air pollution emissions. First, the low emission vehicle (LEV II) program sets strict standards for traditional air pollutants. Under the program, volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide would be cut by 5 percent and 11 percent respectively. Second, the global warming pollution standards set a fleet-wide average global warming emission standard that the major automakers need to achieve. By 2016, new cars would emit 34 percent less global warming gases, while light-duty trucks would produce 25 percent less. Third, the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) program helps to drive further technological development by requiring automakers to invest in researching and producing advanced-technology vehicles.

"We applaud the continued leadership of the State of New Mexico and the City of Albuquerque on global warming. The Clean Cars Program is major success for all of us who care about clean air, protecting public health and solving global warming," concluded Ketcham.

The twenty three organizations represented by the Clean Air Advocacy Groups are: 1000 Friends of New Mexico, American Lung Association of New Mexico, Conservation Voters New Mexico, Consumer Federation of America, Environment New Mexico, Environmental Defense, Land of Enchantment Clean Cities Coalition, Natural Resources Defense Council, New Energy Economy, New Mexico Chapter of the American College of Physicians, New Mexico Conference of Churches, New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light, New Mexico Medical Society, New Mexico Pediatric Society, New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility, New Mexico Public Interest Research Group, New Mexico Thoracic Society, New Voice of Business, Renewable Energy Partners of New Mexico, Sierra Club, Southwest Energy Alliance, Union of Concerned Scientists and Partnership for Earth Spirituality.

Representing the groups at the hearings were: David Bookbinder of the Sierra Club; Lauren Ketcham of Environment New Mexico; Dr. Steve Pilon, an emergency room physician at Presbyterian; Dr. Gerald Geernaert of Los Alamos National Laboratories and Eric Skelton of Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM).

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