

2007 EPA Waiver Hearing on California State Motor Vehicle Pollution Control Standards

Background

- The Clean Air Act allows states with poor air quality to choose between complying with federal vehicle emission standards and adopting the more protective standards—known as the Clean Cars Program—implemented by the state of California. In late 2004, California adopted first-of-their-kind standards requiring cars and light-duty trucks to limit emissions that contribute to global warming. Since then, 11 other states have adopted the California tailpipe emissions standards.
- The U.S. EPA has been sitting on California’s application for a waiver under the Clean Air Act, which will permit the state to require stricter global warming emission standards for new vehicles. Without the Bush administration’s stamp of approval, California—and the other 11 states that have adopted the Clean Cars Program—will not be able to take this important step toward cutting global warming pollution from tailpipes.
- EPA has routinely granted California’s waiver requests more than 50 times in the last four decades.

California’s Standards are, in the Aggregate, at least as Protective of Public Health and Welfare as the Federal Standards

- California’s package of standards is more protective of public health and welfare than the federal standards. The federal government has not even set global warming emission standards for vehicles.

California Needs These Standards to Meet Compelling and Extraordinary Conditions

- California continues to face compelling and extraordinary conditions that justify the need for separate state standards. Global warming poses a compelling and extraordinary threat to California’s environment, public health, and economy. Global warming will worsen air quality, threaten water supplies for people and agriculture, and damage important ecological systems.
- California and the rest of the United States already are feeling the effects of global warming, which will only get worse as temperatures continue to rise. In April 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that continued warming will cause:
 - Water stress. Warming in western mountains is projected to cause “decreased snowpack, more winter flooding, and reduced summer flows, exacerbating competition for over-allocated water resources.”
 - Forest fires. Pests, diseases, and fire are projected to have “increasing impacts on forests, with an extended period of high fire risk and large increases in area burned.”
 - Heat waves. Cities that currently experience heat waves are expected to face “an increased number, intensity, and duration of heat waves,” threatening people’s health, particularly that of elderly Americans.

- The IPCC also concluded, however, that “many impacts can be avoided, reduced, or delayed” by quickly and significantly reducing global warming pollution. To prevent dangerous global warming, the United States must reduce its total global warming emissions from today’s levels by the end of this decade, by at least 15-20% by 2020, and by at least 80% by 2050 in order to avoid the worst impacts of global warming.
- Given the compelling need to cut global warming pollution and the extraordinary consequences of failing to do so, EPA should immediately allow California and the other states implement global warming emissions standards for cars and light trucks.

California’s Program Not “Arbitrary and Capricious”

- California acted based upon the facts—that cars and SUVs are a major contributor to global warming pollution—and rationally acted to reduce that pollution at the source. California’s standards were developed over four years with careful and measured technical review and public input.
- Passenger vehicles are the largest source of global warming emissions in California, responsible for approximately 40% of carbon dioxide emissions in the state.
- California’s program would significantly cut global warming pollution from passenger vehicles in the state. Beginning in model year 2009, California’s program would require automakers to reduce the average amount of global warming pollution from their cars, light trucks and SUVs. By 2015, new cars would be required to emit 34% and light trucks 25% less global warming pollution on average.
- California and the other states that have adopted the California program account for more than one-third of the U.S. auto market. By cutting global warming pollution from tailpipes, these states can help make a big dent in the emissions reductions we need to achieve to avoid the worst effects of global warming.
- According to an analysis by the Arizona PIRG (Arizona Public Interest Research Group) Education Fund, by 2020 the cumulative emissions reductions achieved by the 12 state clean cars programs will be equivalent to taking 74 million of today’s cars off the road for an entire year.

California’s Standards Are Feasible

- California’s standards are feasible. They can be met with technology already in the market and will save vehicle owners in lower maintenance and operating costs over the lifetimes of the vehicle. The standards give automakers flexibility to apply any technology they choose to reduce global warming emissions, including production of vehicles that use lower carbon fuels.

Conclusion

- California officially requested this waiver in December 2005—18 months ago. It is time for the EPA to give the states the green light to implement the program.
- Global warming demands immediate action at the local, state and federal levels. The EPA should grant California’s waiver request and give states the power to cut global warming pollution from cars and light trucks.

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