



January 24, 2008
For Immediate Release

Contact: Marissa Stone, NMED
(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

Governor Richardson and 13 Other Governors Issue Letter to EPA Administrator Expressing Dissatisfaction over Refusal of Clean Car Waiver

(Santa Fe, NM) Governor Richardson and the governors of 13 other states today sent a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator expressing disappointment in the administrator's dismissal of a waiver that would allow states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars.

The governors — also from Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington — called Administrator Stephen L. Johnson's decision a denial of federal law and the reality of climate change.

“Governors must lead the effort to fight global warming because the federal government is in denial regarding the effects of this battle for the environment,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “We cannot allow this administration to continue to put this nation in jeopardy – the effects of climate change are scientifically proven and threaten humanity and the environment.”

“Cutting emissions in the transportation sector – the third largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in New Mexico – makes sense,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “Reducing those emissions will protect New Mexicans from the effects of ground level ozone linked to asthma in children and the elderly.”

The letter emphasizes that Johnson acted inappropriately in basing his denial of the waiver on a comparison of California's emissions standards to possible co-benefits of the recently enacted federal Energy Bill. “While more efficient CAFE standards are well and good, the most effective strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles is the comprehensive standard that has been adopted by 13 states and is being considered by another seven,” the letter states.

In addition, the governors state that the impacts of climate change become more real every day. “All states face negative impacts to their economies, natural resources and shorelines,” the letter states.

The governors also call Johnson's decision a blocking of states' rights. "The authority of states to address greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles has been clearly and unequivocally supported by recent judicial decisions," according to the letter.

Federal courts in Vermont and California ruled in favor of the California Clean Cars program and the U.S. Supreme Court directed the EPA to take action on global warming.

Last month, New Mexico became the first Intermountain state and the thirteenth state in the nation to adopt the Clean Car program after the Environmental Improvement Board and the Albuquerque-Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board voted to approve the regulations that address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars. The program, which became effective January 1, 2008, requires car manufacturers to sell and lease vehicles that meet the standards beginning with model year 2011. The program only applies to new vehicles and will not affect new or used cars sold before that model year.

Transportation accounts for about 17 percent of New Mexico's greenhouse gas emissions and is the third largest and fastest growing source of those emissions in the state. Auto emissions are the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions nationally and will grow rapidly if left unchecked. California has the authority under the Federal Clean Air Act to set its own tougher-than-federal vehicle emission standards if it obtains a waiver from the EPA.

The EPA has not denied a waiver for California in the past 40 years. The EPA, which determined the program did not meet the criteria of being compelling or extraordinary to be granted a waiver, will prevent many states from implementing the California Clean Car standards for greenhouse gas emissions. Those regulations would have included 35 percent of the American population — about 104 million people and about 78 million potential car buyers.

###