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Environment Secretary, Attorney General Issue Comments to U.S. DOT with other States on Fuel Efficiency Standards for Cars and Trucks

*New Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards
Reduce Dependence on Foreign Oil, Combat Global Warming*

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry, along with state Attorney General Gary King filed comments with the U.S. Department of Transportation concerning increasing fuel efficiency in cars and trucks. Those standards are intended to reduce the nation’s dependency on foreign oil and combat global warming.

The letter (attached), addressed to U.S. DOT National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Acting Deputy Administrator Ronald Medford, requests that the agency review its 2008 Environmental Impact Statement concerning Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards for vehicle model years 2012 to 2016. The attorneys general of the states of California, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Oregon, and the secretaries of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Corporation Counsel of the City of New York also signed the letter.

“Fuel efficiency standards can over a period of time make a positive impact on the environment and help address global warming,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “Our comments reflect that those standards must be implemented along with other climate change initiatives.”

The EIS, which is being completed under President Obama’s direction, will re-examine the involved states’ 2008 EIS on CAFE Standards. The letter asks that NHTSA also reconsider comments made by the authors of the letter submitted in 2008 regarding proposed fuel standards for model years 2011 to 2015. The goal of EIS’s is to provide useful, understandable information to decision makers and the public. The new EIS will also take into consideration relevant technological and scientific considerations in setting new standards.

“At this stage of EIS development, we wish to emphasize one point: NHTSA should not minimize the effects of these rules on global warming,” the letter states, “but rather should explain how these rules are consistent with and essential to the nation’s efforts to address global warming.”

NHTSA should – as set forth by a Ninth Circuit Court decision in 2006 in *Earth Island Institute v. U.S. Forest Service* – assess the impact of the standards “when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” That decision determined that fuel efficiency standards, over a period of time, can create collectively significant actions benefitting the environment.

Motor vehicles contribute to 24 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The letter quotes U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson: “Importantly, because no single greenhouse gas source category dominates on the global scale, many individual greenhouse gas source categories could appear too small to matter, when, in fact, they could be very significant contributors in terms of both absolute emissions or in comparison to other similar source categories within the U.S.”

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