



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jerry Martin
Gennet Paauwe
(916) 322-2990
www.arb.ca.gov

ARB Chair Cindy Tuck Objects to NHTSA CAFE Statements

SACRAMENTO: California Air Resources Board (ARB) Chair Cindy Tuck responded to statements made by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) which assert that states do not have the authority to adopt motor vehicle standards that limit greenhouse gas emissions.

“NHTSA’s preamble statement is not binding on ARB and is simply wrong. Congress gave California broad authority to adopt emission standards for motor vehicles when it passed the original Clean Air Act (CAA) in 1970 and it continued that authorization in the 1990 amendments. It has been understood for years that air quality regulations adopted by California might indirectly affect fuel economy, but the authority was granted nonetheless,” said Cindy Tuck, ARB Chair.

The CAA gives the state clear authority to adopt motor vehicle standards that limit tailpipe emissions, with the understanding that those standards would likely differ from those adopted nationally. The state has stood firm on its assertion that California’s greenhouse gas regulation is not a Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard but a pollution control standard that limits ozone-forming nitrogen dioxides and hydroflourocarbons (HFCs) as well as carbon dioxide. In addition to being primary building blocks of ozone, nitrogen oxides are major contributors to California’s particulate matter and acid deposition problems.

“Our Greenhouse Gas regulation is the centerpiece of Governor Schwarzenegger’s work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” Tuck said. “We will vigorously defend this regulation against unwarranted and misguided attacks.”

As states across the nation have criticized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s reluctance to address greenhouse gases, some have taken matters into their own hands. In a show of solidarity with California, the states of Oregon, Washington, New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey are all considering adoption of California’s greenhouse gas standards for automobiles, as allowed by the CAA. As a side benefit, Oregon and Washington will be receiving vehicles that meet California’s more stringent vehicle standards.

According to Tuck, the ARB also has concerns about NHTSA’s proposed CAFE standards for light trucks because they do not include the largest pickups and SUVs among the vehicle classes targeted for increased fuel economy standards. In fact, the NHTSA proposal excludes all pickups or SUVs that weigh more than 8500 pounds.

“While fuel economy is not our domain, we think the proposal must go further. We are concerned that the new CAFE proposals will encourage auto manufacturers to build even bigger vehicles to avoid the new standards and thus undermine NHTSA’s goals. We will be submitting detailed comments on this process as it develops,” Tuck added.

The Air Resources Board is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. ARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.

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