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**Contact:**

**Sue Jones, Natural Resources Council of Maine, 207-622-3101 ext 215**

**Matthew Davis, Environment Maine, 207-318-5162**

**Steve Hinchman, Conservation Law Foundation, 207-729-7733 ext 13**

## **Governor Baldacci Signs Cleaner Car Law**

*Program will cut air and global warming pollution and make cleaner cars available to Maine drivers*

AUGUSTA- In a bold stroke that will clear the skies over Maine and increase the availability of the cleanest cars, such as hybrid gas-electric vehicles, Governor John Elias Baldacci signed the Cleaner Car program into law today. The program was hailed as having benefits to consumers and the environment and keeping Maine apace with the eight other states with strong automobile emissions standards.

“Mainers can breathe easier today, knowing that from here on out, new cars that produce much less pollution and hybrids will be more readily available in Maine,” said Matthew Davis, Advocate for Environment Maine. “We’re moving down the right path towards the cleanest cars possible,” Davis continued.

For the last ten years, the Natural Resources Council of Maine has been leading the effort to bring cleaner cars to Maine. “Today, with the stroke of a pen, Governor Baldacci has taken a step forward in cleaning up our major source of smog and global warming pollution - cars and trucks,” said Sue Jones, Energy Project Director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Under the Cleaner Car standards, beginning in 2009, about 11 percent of new cars sold in Maine will be either hybrid gas-electric or the cleanest gasoline-powered cars. The Cleaner Cars program has been shown by Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) to reduce smog-forming and cancer causing air pollution by about 30 percent in other states such as Vermont and Massachusetts.

Twenty-seven models of gasoline-powered vehicles meet the new Cleaner Cars standard, including some of the most popular in their class, such as the Subaru Outback, Toyota Camry, Ford Focus, Nissan Sentra, Volvo S60, and BMW 325i.

The number of models of hybrid gasoline-electric vehicles continues to increase, with the recently available Ford Escape HEV, Honda Accord Hybrid and Toyota Highlander. Currently in Maine, consumers have to wait for 3 to 18 months for many of the hybrid vehicles.

“Under this new standard, Maine consumers will now have the option of buying a car that is up to 90 percent cleaner than the average new vehicle, at no extra cost,” said Steve Hinchman, Staff Attorney for the Conservation Law Foundation. “But this is just the beginning: the next round of car standards will push Detroit to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

Upon adopting this final piece of the California Low-Emission Vehicle II program, Maine will join New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Vermont in protecting its citizens from the harmful affects of smog and air toxics.

The legislation was supported by a broad coalition of public health, business, and environmental groups as well as the Department of Environmental Protection. It was approved with unanimous support by the Board of Environmental Protection, the Natural Resources Committee and both houses of the Legislature.

“Our elected leaders delivered a win for the people today – for everyone who breathes the air,” said Ed Miller of the American Lung Association.

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To learn more about the new cars that qualify under the new standard, please visit the California’s Drive Clean website at <http://www.driveclean.ca.gov>, or the EPA green vehicle guide at <http://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/>