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OEC Hails U.S. EPA's Decision to Increase Fuel Economy Standards for Cars and Trucks

Environmental Group Also Calls for Congressional Action for Economy-Wide Cap on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it will raise average fuel economy standards on cars and light trucks in the United States to 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016, four years earlier than current federal law requires. EPA will use its authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the federal Clean Air Act to impose more stringent fuel economy rules for new vehicles.

The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) applauds EPA's historic decision, which will constitute the first federal regulation of climate-altering greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as CO₂. Never before has EPA placed limits on GHG emissions for the purpose of stopping or slowing climate change.

EPA's aggressive action, however, does not negate the need for comprehensive regulation of GHGs. Transportation accounts for only one-fourth of national GHG emissions. Coal-fired power plants and other industrial sources emit the majority of GHGs into the atmosphere.

"The best way to reduce national GHG emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change is through comprehensive federal cap and trade legislation," said Will Reisinger, OEC Staff Attorney. "While increasing fuel economy standards is a great way to address pollution from the transportation sector, we need to supplement mileage requirements with an economy-wide system that will address emissions from all major sources."

A federal cap and trade system would place a definite limit—a "cap"—on the total amount of GHGs that could be emitted by all regulated sources within the United States each year. Emissions credits then would be allocated to regulated GHG emitters. Facility owners would have to pay for any emissions that exceed their allocated emissions allowances.

A cap and trade system would create a market for tradable emissions credits, allowing emitters to buy and sell those credits. Such a system would provide a financial incentive for continuous innovation and GHG reductions. Facility owners would have an incentive to update technology and continuously reduce emissions to avoid having to pay a charge; they could even sell unused credits for a profit.

"While today's decision by the EPA to increase fuel efficiency is a great step forward, it should not distract lawmakers from what should be their top priority: passing a comprehensive climate change bill," said Reisinger. "We urge Governor Strickland and Senators Brown and Voinovich

to use their influence to help Congress pass a climate bill this year. Ohio could be in a strong bargaining position, as it is unlikely that Congress will be able to pass comprehensive legislation without the support of Ohio's leaders."

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.