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Senator Dianne Feinstein

of California

Senator Feinstein Calls on EPA to Exempt California from Federal Oxygenate Mandate

Action Comes as EPA Proposes Waiver for New Hampshire
January 28, 2004

Washington, DC – In the wake of a proposal by the Environmental Protection Agency to grant New Hampshire a waiver from a federal mandate requiring the State to add oxygenates such as MTBE or ethanol to gasoline, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein urged the EPA to stop stonewalling California officials who have sought a similar waiver for years. The following are details from a letter sent today to EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt:

“I am concerned about the EPA's decision to allow New Hampshire to opt-out of the federal reformulated gasoline program. Like New Hampshire, California's refiners can produce gasoline that is cleaner than that made in the federal reformulated gasoline program. Further, California has had widespread problems with MTBE contaminating our water supplies. If the citizens of New Hampshire deserve water supplies that are untainted by MTBE, don't the people of California?

The State of California is allowed, under the Clean Air Act, to set its own air quality standards. As a result, it has a history of establishing standards that are more stringent than those established by the EPA for the rest of the nation. Granting this waiver to California will allow the State to continue being a national leader in setting clean air standards.

As I stated in my previous letter, California's application to the EPA for a waiver from the federal oxygenate standard was based on sound science. California has suffered from MTBE contamination in well known spots such as Lake Tahoe and Santa Monica and throughout the entire State.

In addition, switching from MTBE to ethanol, as I referenced in my previous letter, has only worsened air quality in southern California. Just as EPA wants to “allow New Hampshire residents to continue to enjoy the air quality benefits of cleaner gasoline, while ending the oxygenate requirements which have increased the risk of MTBE contamination of ground and surface waters in New Hampshire,” it should give Californians the same chance at ensuring they too will enjoy the benefits of clean air and water in the future.

California's waiver application has been pending at EPA since 1999. It is well past time for the EPA to act to grant California a waiver from the federal oxygenate requirement.”

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