



Senator Feinstein Urges EPA Panel to Allow California to Improve State's Air Quality by Adopting Small Engine Emissions Rules

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Washington, DC— In a statement today to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) panel, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) urged that California be granted authorization under the Clean Air Act to implement its own emissions regulations for lawnmowers and other small engines. These tougher standards will improve air quality and benefit the public health without any adverse impact on consumer safety. The following is a written Senator Feinstein presented to the panel:

“I appreciate the opportunity to comment on what should be a very straightforward issue: I strongly believe that it is time for EPA to grant California the authorization to implement its small engines rule.

As you know, California has worked hard to improve its air quality, but there is still a long way to go before the federal health-based air quality standards are achieved throughout my state. Lives are at stake: the American Lung Association estimates that 7100 Californians die each year from illnesses related to unhealthy air.

We cannot accept these deaths from poor air quality; California's small engines rule is an effective way to help prevent them. Small engines are highly polluting: mowing grass for one hour with a gasoline powered lawnmower causes as much pollution as operating a car for 13 hours, according to the California Air Resources Board.

California's small engine regulations would greatly reduce small engine emissions that now equal the air pollution produced by 4 million cars. The pollution reduced from these engines in 2010 would be the equivalent of removing more than 800,000 cars from the road.

On the one hand there is a great public health need for this rule; on the other there is no reason for its disapproval. The science has clearly shown that the rule is safe: independent peer reviews, the Consumer Products Safety Commission, a detailed Failure Mode and Effects Analysis performed by private experts, and extensive field testing have all supported the EPA's finding that the proposed small engines regulations present no safety concerns for consumers and in fact may improve the safety of lawnmowers and other small engines.

I believe it is highly significant that four of the small engine manufacturers themselves – Tecumseh, Honda, Kawasaki, and Kohler -- have publicly stated that they can and will comply with the state emissions limits, and the resulting products will not pose an increased risk of harm to the public. It should be easy for the EPA to grant California its authorization when the manufacturers themselves believe that the rule will improve air quality and benefit the public health without any adverse impact on consumer safety.

Now the question is how quickly EPA will act following today’s public hearing. The Clean Air Act provides clear direction on this matter: EPA “shall” grant California authorization to move forward with needed air pollution regulations for offroad engines if the rules are consistent with section 209 of the Act. 42 U.S.C. 7543(e)(2).

Just this March a report from the National Research Council validated California’s pioneering efforts to adopt tough smog controls like the small engines rule EPA is reviewing today.

That report, by an 11-member committee of engineers, health and public policy experts, concluded that California still needs to adopt its own tougher emission standards for cars, trucks, and small engines such as lawnmowers in order to combat chronic air pollution. The report stated: “California should continue its pioneering role in setting mobile-source emissions standards. The role will aid the state’s efforts to achieve air quality goals and will allow it to continue to be a proving ground for new emissions-control technologies that benefit California and the rest of the nation.”

I urge you to promptly respond to public comments received after the public hearing, and to grant California the authorization to implement its small engines rule by September, if at all possible. California needs EPA’s approval in time to put its rule in effect in January. Any delay beyond January will perpetuate the serious health impacts of air pollution affecting tens of millions of Californians.

Your agency has done an impressive job in its thorough scientific analysis of California’s small engine rules. The evidence is clear – now is the time to authorize California to put that rule into effect.”