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April 1, 2010

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I write to congratulate you on the upcoming finalization of the federal regulations to implement the light duty vehicle fuel economy and tailpipe emissions standards you announced almost a year ago. This landmark energy independence and global warming agreement, the authority for which is based in both the Energy Independence and Security and Clean Air Acts, was embraced by all stakeholders – from the automobile industry to the Sierra Club – and is a prime example of the manner in which Americans expect their government to work.

By requiring unprecedented levels of collaboration between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Transportation, the State of California, and other non-governmental stakeholders, your Administration showed true leadership. These regulations will lead to a fleet-wide fuel economy standard of 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016, a savings of 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the life of the program, and a reduction of about 900 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. While consumers save money at the pump for gasoline they will no longer need to buy, automakers will also enjoy regulatory certainty, which will help them design and build the advanced technology vehicles of the future.

I encourage you to build upon this excellent beginning, and quickly embark on the development of a new set of federal standards for model years 2017 and beyond. I am not alone; A recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) entitled “NHTSA and EPA’s Partnership for Setting Fuel Economy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards Improved Analysis and Should Be Maintained” found that the collaboration between the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

and EPA led to the development of more robust, transparent and lower-cost regulations. In fact, this report concluded that “if NHTSA and EPA do not collaborate closely on future standards, there is a risk that the standards may not be harmonized, which would lead to increased compliance costs for manufacturers.” In addition, this report contained several notable and specific recommendations:

- NHTSA and EPA should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with one another in order to formalize their standard-setting process and respective responsibilities.
- NHTSA and EPA should document and publish the process used in this joint rulemaking to establish a roadmap for any future rulemaking efforts in order to increase transparency.
- NHTSA should conduct and document a retrospective analysis of the model year 2008 through 2011 light truck standards in order to validate the accuracy of its key assumptions related to the costs and benefits associated with proposed standards, and should consider involving EPA in this process.

I believe that the implementation of these recommendations would help to build upon the strong foundation laid by EPA and NHTSA in their development of the 2012-16 standards. I therefore encourage you to continue the tremendous progress your Administration has already made in the area of reducing both our greenhouse gas emissions and our dependence on imported oil from the transportation sector by committing the resources of both EPA and NHTSA to developing harmonized federal light duty vehicle standards for model years 2017 and beyond.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and
Environment
Committee on Energy and Commerce