

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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(202) 225-6371
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July 28, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Jackson:

As members of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, we write with concerns and questions regarding the President's forthcoming announcement to mandate an increase in Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards to as much as 56.2 miles per gallon (mpg) by 2025.¹

Implementation of this mandate would have a clear and significant impact on American consumers and the economy. A June 2011 study by the Center for Automotive Research found that compliance with a 56.2 mpg mandate would increase the average cost of a vehicle by over \$6,700.² Those price increases are certain to reduce demand, in turn reducing the number of cars built and sold, and the auto industry jobs that accompany them.

While these economic factors alone raise serious concerns about the merits of this proposal, equally troubling is the potential impact a dramatic increase in fuel economy requirements could have on vehicle safety. The relationship between mileage standards and vehicle size and safety is well established. In 2002, the National Academy of Sciences studied this issue and concluded that "the downsizing of automobiles in the 1970s and 1980s—whether a result of CAFE standards or other market-driven needs—may have contributed an additional 1,300 to 2,600

¹ NOTE: for the purposes of this letter, references to forthcoming CAFE standards are intended to also include concurrently developed and advanced EPA greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions rules.

² <http://www.cargroup.org/pdfs/ami.pdf>

fatalities in 1993.”³ The prospect of similar downsizing-related fatality increases resulting from an aggressive new mileage mandate warrants careful review and consideration.

We strongly urge you to refrain from further increasing CAFE standards in the absence of a clear demonstration that such action will not negatively impact the economy and vehicle safety. Further, and in accordance with the Committee’s responsibility for oversight of scientific and technical issues associated with energy, environment, and transportation issues, we ask that you provide a detailed summary of the following by August 19, 2011.

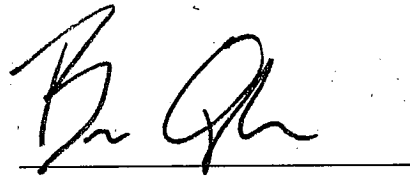
1. The current scientific and technical understanding of the tradeoffs between safety and fuel efficiency standards, particularly as they relate to the proposals under current consideration.
2. Administration expectations (with reference to specific scientific or technical supporting information) regarding the degree to which future technological advances will mitigate safety tradeoffs.
3. The extent to which reduced fuel economy associated with mid-level ethanol blends and the Renewable Fuel Standard is expected to necessitate additional technological advancement and/or result in additional costs in order to achieve compliance.
4. Recent and ongoing Federal research into the relationship between fuel efficiency standards and vehicle safety, current gaps in understanding and corresponding research needs; and
5. The Administration’s plans for considering and incorporating this safety-related technical information into its forthcoming CAFE standard decision.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. Please direct any questions to the Subcommittee on Energy and Environment at 202.225.8844.

Sincerely,

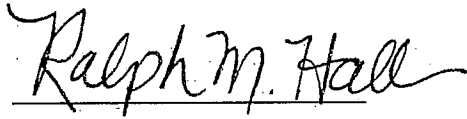


Rep. Andy Harris

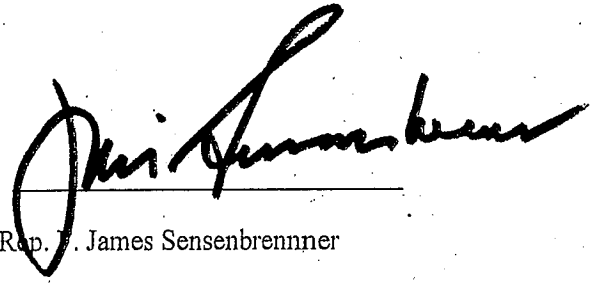


Rep. Ben Quayle

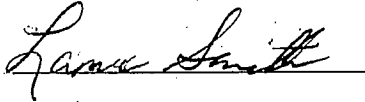
³ http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10172&page=1



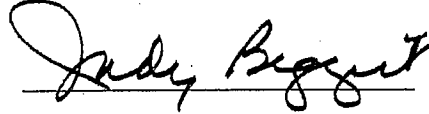
Rep. Ralph Hall



Rep. J. James Sensenbrenner



Rep. Lamar Smith



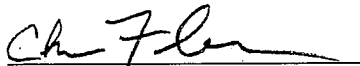
Rep. Judy Biggert



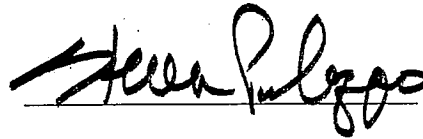
Rep. Randy Neugebauer



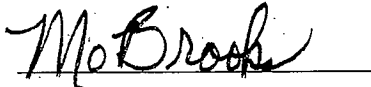
Rep. Paul Broun



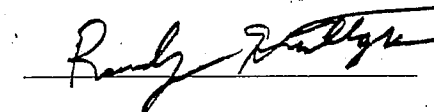
Rep. Chuck Fleishmann



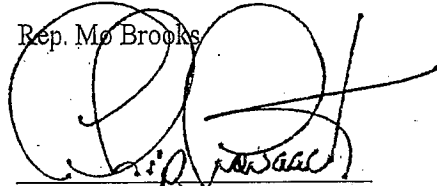
Rep. Steven Palazzo



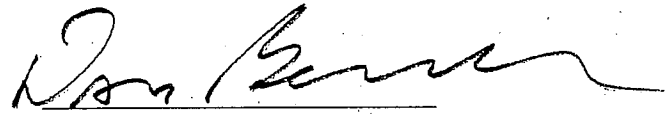
Rep. Mo Brooks



Rep. Randy Hultgren



Rep. Chip Cravaack



Rep. Dan Benishek

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member

The Honorable Brad Miller, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

The Honorable David Wu, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation