

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing in response to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) consideration of a proposal to increase the ethanol blend, and we urge you to maintain the current blend of 10 %. We have serious concerns about the consequences of raising the blend and how this could negatively affect already struggling American consumers.

Americans vividly remember the spike of gasoline prices last summer. Due to this spike, many Americans significantly altered their driving habits and actively sought ways to improve their cars' fuel economy to decrease the frequency of costly fill ups. If we undertake a policy that increases the ethanol blend, many changes Americans made could be voided. Since ethanol has lower energy content per gallon, more fuel is required to travel the same distance, which will mean drivers will have to fill their gas tanks more frequently. In fact, the Department of Energy (DOE) has begun assessing the use of ethanol blends and their effects on vehicle performance. In DOE's report, *Effects of Intermediate Ethanol Blends on Legacy Vehicles and Small Non-Road Engines*, researchers tested 13 different vehicles with ethanol blends up to 20% and, on average, fuel economy of the vehicles decreased by over 7%. Given the current economy and the fact that many Americans are struggling to make ends meet it would be irresponsible to create a policy that that would increase the frequency that drivers must fill up their gas tanks in order to get to work and school.

Additionally, we hope that EPA will intensely examine how an increase in the ethanol blend will affect other aspects of the economy. Ethanol is a major driver of corn prices. Last year we saw the price of corn reach record highs resulting in economic shock for consumers and livestock producers. As a result of the record corn prices, other food commodities also dramatically increased as farmers shifted land from these other commodities to plant corn, continuing to drive up prices for American consumers. We have concerns that increasing the ethanol blend in gasoline will only exacerbate this problem.

It is our hope that EPA will not increase the ethanol blend. While we are strong supporters of renewable fuels, we feel that such a move to increase the ethanol blend will have unintended consequences for many Americans that could be detrimental in this tough economic time. We urge EPA to delay such an increase until cellulosic and other advanced biofuels are commercially available. However, until these alternatives become viable, an increase in the

ethanol blend would be a hit to the pocketbooks of struggling Americans who do not want to see their cost of living increase.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bob Goodlatte

Joe Barton

Shelley Moore Capito

Gene M. Burdette

Greg Studd

Virginia Foxx

Brian P. Babin

Lynn M. Williams

Darin New

John Boozma

For Good, W. T.

W. T. Good

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Jim Linsenbrenner

John Medley

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Paul Brown

Joe Wilson

Marsha Blackburn

Wally Huger

Sue Thyrick

Pete Stank

**cc: The Honorable Lisa Jackson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture**