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**National Research Council Report Supports States' Ability
to Adopt California's Clean Vehicle Program**

March 16, 2006 (Boston, MA) - The Northeast states welcome the National Research Council's (NRC) new report reaffirming the importance of states having the ability to adopt California's more stringent air pollution standards for automobiles and trucks. The NRC considered alternatives that would weaken state authority but did not agree on any recommendations that would change current law or prohibit states from adopting California's cleaner vehicle emission standards. The practical result is that the NRC report rejected arguments from vehicle manufacturers wanting to curtail state authority to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles.

Today's report was issued in response to a request from Congress for the NRC to evaluate the California process for setting automobile and truck standards for air pollution and how other states adopt the California standards. The NRC report, entitled *State and Federal Standards for Mobile Source Emissions*, found that California's approach to setting vehicle pollution standards continues to provide air quality benefits and innovation beyond the federal standards. It recommends that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) speed its review and approval of California's standards, a recommendation supported by the Northeast states.

Under the Clean Air Act, the federal government establishes national air pollution standards for automobiles and trucks. The Act also grants California the authority to set its own more stringent standards, which other states may adopt in lieu of the federal standards. California has established more stringent air pollution requirements for cars, sport utility vehicles (SUVs), and heavy-duty trucks that result in reduced amounts of ground-level ozone (smog), fine particles, greenhouse gases, and air toxics. The California Low Emission Vehicle program has led to the development of cars with near-zero emissions.

Barbara Kwetz, Director of Planning and Evaluation at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Waste Management Prevention, stated: "It's important that states have the full suite of tools available to them to reduce air pollution. We've been doing the California program for more than a decade and it's worked well. There is no need for additional bureaucratic hurdles that would hinder a state from adopting or moving forward with California's clean car program."

The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to establish federal health standards for air quality - called the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. States are responsible for meeting the air quality health standards and are at risk of incurring significant penalties, including the loss of federal funding for highways, if the standards are not met.

“The California motor vehicle standards are about improving public health,” said William O’Sullivan, Director of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Air Quality and NESCAUM Chair. He added: “Given the continuing health and environmental risks posed by automobiles and trucks, it is imperative that states retain the authority under the Clean Air Act to implement the most effective available measures to reduce air pollution from these sources. We are pleased that the panel recommended maintaining the existing Clean Air Act process.”

“Motor vehicles emit about half the air pollutants contributing to unhealthy air quality in our region, especially in urban areas – and pose health and environmental risks. The California program is a highly effective measure to reduce air pollution from these sources and is a key element in New York’s strategy to improve air quality for its 19 million citizens,” said David Shaw, Director of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation’s Division of Air Resources.

In addition to reducing smog-forming pollution, the California Low Emission Vehicle program also will result in lower greenhouse gas emissions from cars and SUVs beginning in 2009.

“It is critical to preserve the rights of states to take action to protect their air quality,” stated Anne Gobin, Chief of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection’s Bureau of Air Management. “In Connecticut, we are committed to taking all possible steps to improve our air quality and protect the health of our citizens. We have adopted the California clean car program to achieve clean air and reduce greenhouse gases. We have also adopted a Climate Change Action Plan to further reduce the volume of greenhouse gases produced by activities in our state.”

“Congress placed the responsibility for meeting the air quality health standards squarely on the shoulders of the states,” said Arthur Marin, NESCAUM’s Executive Director. “The ability to adopt the California motor vehicle pollution limits is a crucial state tool in our ongoing efforts to provide clean, healthy air throughout the Northeast.”

Fifteen states and the District of Columbia currently have the stricter California standards for either trucks or automobiles: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Washington.

NESCAUM is the regional association of air pollution control agencies representing Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

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