

For Immediate Release: January 10, 2008

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Solis: "The Facts Substantiate the Need for California's Waiver"

Los Angeles, CA - *Today Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (D-CA) released the following statement, as prepared for delivery, at a hearing of the Environment and Public Works Committee titled, "Investigating EPA's Obstruction of Global Warming Controls for Vehicles."*

"For the past several years we have worked closely with the state of California and fifteen other states to develop global warming controls for vehicles. These global warming controls are critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting public health. Twenty percent of all human-made carbon dioxide emissions in the United States come from vehicles. In California, that number is at least thirty percent. These emissions significantly impact public health, particularly the health of environmental justice communities already dealing with the cumulative impacts of environmental contamination.

"Climate change will increase the risks of climate-sensitive health outcomes, and create economic instability in already vulnerable populations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that cities in North America that already experience heatwaves are expected to face more frequent, more intense and longer heatwaves over the course of the next century with the potential for consequent adverse health impacts.

"Over fifty percent of the 39 million people living in poverty reside in urban settings, a large percentage of which are minorities. More than 15 million Latinos lack health coverage, exacerbating these circumstances and making the consequences of such health impacts more severe. Last fall the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) testified before this Committee on the health effects of climate change. Her full, unedited testimony confirmed that people of lower socioeconomic status and members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

"In addition to direct impacts on health, global warming could have considerable impact on our natural resources, including water, which is in critical supply in the Southwest. Communities across Southern California felt the effects of climate change as more than 20 fires raged uncontrollably in October, 2007. In the June 2006 *Science* journal, researchers concluded that more than land use changes or forest management practices, the changing climate was the most important factor driving the increase in the average number of large wildfires in the Western United States.

"As public officials, we must make tough decisions about how to regulate emissions which contribute to asthma, cancer and other conditions which are disproportionately impacting low income communities and our resources. We have made and continue to make those tough decisions in California.

"Unfortunately, the Bush Administration rejected California's policy, and has chosen industry interests and oil dependency over energy efficiency, energy security, and the health of our families. It has chosen to be obstructionist, rather than a partner, in the effort to reduce global

warming emissions. And it has made these decisions based not on facts, but based on rhetoric and politics, leaving us to question both the policy decision and the process. The facts substantiate the need for California's waiver. Simply put, the federal government does not have a greenhouse gas emission reduction plan.

"As a Member who worked closely on the development of H.R. 6, Energy Independence and Security Act, which was signed into law on December 19, 2007, I am appalled that the Administration would use this legislation as justification for its rejection of California's waiver. During consideration of H.R. 6, Congress rejected requests from the Bush Administration to waive EPA's authority to regulate emissions and grant state waivers under the Clean Air Act. While the energy bill includes the largest increase in fuel economy standards since the program was created in 1975, it is not a greenhouse gas standard.

"In addition, California's law would regulate broader greenhouse gases, including those from refrigerants in vehicle air conditions and alternative fuels. With the waiver, California's law would reduce carbon dioxide emissions alone by 17.2 million metric tons – more than double what fuel economy increases in H.R. 6 would achieve.

"Without the facts on its side, the Administration appears to have disregarded the process in order to craft the decision it favored. Reports indicate that the EPA ignored standard Administration protocols, overruled unanimous recommendations of EPA's own legal and technical staff, refused to consult the Agency's technical experts and engaged instead with White House decision makers. From climate change, to libraries, to regulation of rocket fuel, the Bush Administration has ignored the science, developed policy with corporate interests, and done so at the risk of worsening public health. Each time it has been up to our states to intervene and protect the health of its residents. This time is no different.

"As a major contributor to climate change, the U.S. must be a leader in the effort to achieve a framework for mandatory global warming emission reductions. California, and fifteen other states, have the courage needed to address this issue. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration showed once again that it will put politics and corporate interests before public health.

"I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses today, and will continue to work with them and others to secure approval for the California waiver and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Failure to do so unnecessarily risks the health, environment, and security of citizens in the United States and around the world.

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