February 23, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

As environmental agency commissioners in States that have adopted the California Clean Cars standards, we are writing to express our concern with the Resolution of Disapproval recently introduced by Senator Murkowski of Alaska that would invalidate the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) finding of endangerment for greenhouse gases (GHGs). Many of our States have previously expressed opposition to this Resolution because it would represent a denial of the overwhelming scientific evidence of real and urgent threats to human health and welfare posed by climate change, and would strip the nation of a proven, effective tool to begin to address this threat. Today we are writing to elevate a specific issue of national importance that may be jeopardized by the Resolution.

We believe the Murkowski Resolution would prevent the federal program for passenger vehicle GHG standards from being finalized. As you know, under this program, USEPA proposed federal GHG standards for vehicles that will be roughly equivalent to both the federal corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards and the GHG standards pioneered by California and adopted by 13 other states and the District of Columbia. The existence of comparable federal GHG standards, in turn, would allow our States to accept compliance with the federal program as demonstrating compliance with the California program. This nationally harmonized state-federal program has been widely praised by the automobile industry, environmental organizations, labor unions, States, the Obama Administration, and many members of Congress.

Without comparable federal vehicle GHG standards, our States will not be able to offer this alternative compliance option to automakers. Although the Resolution does not affect our States' independent authority under the Clean Air Act to separately adopt and enforce the existing California GHG standards, we believe that the entire nation would benefit from the cleaner vehicles, greater energy security, and consumer savings that a long overdue federal program will provide. Moreover, we understand that vehicle manufacturers appreciate the flexibility of alternative compliance options and a harmonized national program. We would regret to lose these benefits to consumers, industry, and the Nation.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose the Resolution of Disapproval and to preserve the hard-won benefits of a harmonized state-federal vehicle standards program.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary D. Nichols, Chair

California Air Resources Board

Amey Marrella, Commissioner

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

David Littell, Commissioner

Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Laurie Burt, Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Ron Curry, Secretary

New Mexico State Environment Department

Pete Grannis, Commissioner

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

Dick Pedersen, Director

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

W. Michael Sullivan, Director

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Ted Sturdevant, Director

Washington Department of Ecology