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Ford Urges Other Automakers To Embrace California GHG Agreement

December 1, 2020

Ford Motor Co. is reportedly lobbying its fellow automakers to drop their legal support for the Trump administration’s preemption of state vehicle greenhouse gas rules and embrace California’s existing “framework” agreement for auto GHG standards with Ford and four other auto companies.

Additionally, the top Democrat on the Senate environment committee is specifically urging the rest of the auto sector to endorse the California agreement as a marker for federal rules under the incoming Biden administration.

Ford’s lobbying -- ahead of a Dec. 1 meeting of the auto sector’s main trade association -- is the latest sign that the industry is looking to engage with Biden officials on the future of vehicle GHG and fuel economy regulations, with the Biden camp long promising efforts to strengthen such standards.

It comes on the heels of General Motors’ [decision to withdraw its support](#) for the Trump administration’s revocation of a Clean Air Act preemption waiver for states’ vehicle GHG programs.

The fight over Trump’s preemption is “now, at least for the next set of years, essentially moot,” Ford Americas President Kumar Galhotra said in [a Nov. 25 letter](#) to other automakers, [as reported by Reuters](#).

“The more relevant issue is thus the question of the standards,” he wrote, noting Biden’s intent to strengthen them, and urging automakers to “actively consider embracing the California framework.”

The reference to California’s framework alludes to a 2019 agreement between the state and Ford, Honda, Volkswagen, and BMW -- subsequently embraced by Volvo this year -- to embrace standards out to model year 2026 more stringent than the Trump administration’s rollback of federal GHG limits, though softer than Obama-era requirements.

The deal requires the companies to make a fuel economy and GHG improvement of about 3.7 percent annually across their national fleets, compared to a roughly 5 percent improvement under the Obama rules. The state’s deal allows about 1 percentage point to be met with credits from electric vehicles (EVs). Among its most critical components was also that participating companies must not support the Trump preemption rule.

‘Join Us’

Ford’s urging comes after [months of indications](#) from industry sources and others that the California deal could be a basis for near-term federal standards, even as calls have grown for an ambitious regulatory program over time that would include a major push toward EVs.

The company’s call is also consistent with [recent comments to Inside EPA](#) by outgoing California Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols -- who is reportedly a front-runner to be Biden’s EPA administrator -- that the deal could be a “template to work from” for near-term national requirements.

Senate Environment & Public Works Committee ranking member Tom Carper (D-DE) in a Dec. 1 statement embraced Ford’s call for all automakers to publicly embrace the deal with California, and by extension other states.

“Remaining silent or merely withdrawing support from the outgoing administration’s illegal rollback and challenges to state authority is not enough, not when there is so much at stake,” he wrote.

Last week, Carper told a press call that he has “already started reaching out to CEOs of car companies that have not been a part of this [California deal] and get them to join us. As soon as we get this administration in our rearview mirror, and [remove] the threat of retaliation by Donald Trump and his minions, I think the other car companies will join us in this.”

However, some environmentalists have said California’s deal does not ensure sufficient GHG cuts.

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