

Washington Update

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation has learned that a letter has been sent by 4 US Senators to President Obama criticizing the recent announcement by the EPA to delay the mandate that would force gasoline manufactures to move from 10% ethanol/gasoline blends to 15% ethanol in its blends. The new blend is commonly referred to as e-15. Senators Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), John Thune (R-S.D.), Mike Johanns (R-Neb.) and Kit Bond (R-Mo.) all signed a letter delivered to Obama yesterday, June 23rd. The senators, all from states that have a large economic interest in ethanol, stated that the gulf oil spill underlines the need for less reliance on fossil fuels and a greater need for more ethanol use.

The EPA decided to push a deadline on issuing a rulemaking that would mandate the use of 15% blends across the country. The new time frame is early fall for release of the ruling. The EPA states that the new blend will be safe in auto engines manufactured after 2001, after testing just 18 vehicles. It is not clear if any of those vehicles were a motorcycle. The agency went on to state that it is also not clear if the new blend would damage vehicles earlier than 2001.

Ethanol causes an engine to run hotter and get less gas mileage, but it does reduce carbon monoxide emissions making it the darling of environmentalist groups. However, air cooled engines are likely to run so hot with the new blend that engine damage is almost going to be unavoidable.

The lawmakers called that first delay "unnecessary and unfortunate" in their letter but said they are more concerned about news late last week that EPA will not make a decision until later this fall.

This second delay should "not be tolerated," the lawmakers said. The letter asks Obama to "take all action necessary" to expedite the waiver petition and immediately consider an interim blend of 12 percent ethanol.

The same problems arise with a 12% blend as with a 15% blend. No one knows what the compromise blend will do to motorcycles, air cooled engines, or other vehicles pre 2001.

Should you hail from one of the States that the four Senators are from, the MRF encourages you to contact them and ask for proof that the new blend will not harm the engines in question. All others are encouraged to contact the White House on this important matter. "Its crucial that the American people press for more testing on this issue as Obama cabinet members have gone on record saying they 'are confident' this new measure will be approved" said Jeff Hennie, Vice President of Government Relations and Public Affairs for the Motorcycle Riders Foundation.

White House Contact info

On the web: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

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Highway Bill

At a recent meeting with Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), the chief architect of the financing portion of the next Highway Authorization Bill, the MRF learned that the support for the robust financing the bill deserves is just not there. With Federal spending already at an all time high, the political will to raise any funds for the bill has slipped away for the time being. It's unlikely at this point that a final bill will be passed before the current extension is up at the end of this year. The MRF encourages you to attend any town hall style meetings your Senators or Representatives may hold over the 4th of July break and urge them to get a bill passed soon.