

New Mexico Gov. Lujan Grisham Draws Criticism For Support Of Federal Greenhouse Gas Rules

New federal environmental standards for vehicle fuels were adopted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and applauded by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham as the state aims to enact its own similar requirements.

But the move was criticized by New Mexican Republicans who argued tougher regulations on manufacturers of cars and trucks could translate to higher costs for motorists.

The EPA on Monday announced it finalized its rules intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles, part of a broader goal to curb air pollution and address subsequent climate change.

The standards applied to cars and trucks of model years 2023 through 2026, and were posited to save Americans \$190 billion by reducing pollution, benefitting public health and driving down fuel costs paid by drivers at the pump.

Another set of standards were expected in 2027, per the EPA's announcement, via a separate future rulemaking to advance the federal administration's agenda of promoting zero-emissions vehicles under an executive order issued this year by President Joe Biden.

In New Mexico, the State Legislature considered a bill earlier this year that would have adopted a clean fuel standard.

That bill stalled in the House of Representatives after passing the New Mexico Senate, and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) via the Environmental Improvement Board was working to develop and adopt a rulemaking to establish such regulations.

Lujan Grisham urged lawmakers to pass the clean fuel standard in the upcoming 2022 Legislative Session to commence in January, arguing the transportation sector was the second-highest emitter of greenhouse gasses in New Mexico.

She agreed with the EPA that a clean fuel standard would save consumers by embracing low-emission technology and reducing the environmental and health impacts of pollution.

The January 30-day session was intended primarily for budgetary decisions, but Lujan Grisham has the power to set other legislative priorities for lawmakers to consider.

“These new requirements will protect public health by reducing emissions that cause climate change and degrade air quality across the country and right here in New Mexico, where the transportation sector is the second leading emitter of greenhouse gases,” Lujan Grisham said.

“This is exactly why New Mexico must pass a clean fuel standard in the upcoming legislative session. Together, the EPA and my administration are taking bold action for our economy and our climate.”

The proposal also had support from the NMED, as Cabinet Secretary James Kenney said the federal guidelines would assist state-level efforts like New Mexico’s but set a broad standard for all states to follow.

“This rule is instrumental in accelerating our transition to zero tailpipe emissions for all vehicles sold in the United States,” Kenney said. “With EPA’s action and New Mexico’s commitment to adopting both a clean fuel standard

and clean car standards early next year, we're making significant strides toward meeting our ambitious climate goals."

New Mexico GOP leadership was not convinced the new rules were beneficial to the state's economy.

House Republican Leader Jim Townsend representing parts of the oil-rich Eddy County within the Permian Basin oilfield said Lujan Grisham's comments and support of the regulations would lead to higher fuel costs.

He pointed to what Townsend characterized as a pattern of Lujan Grisham favoring environmental issues over the state's economy.

"New Mexico is a mostly rural state, and her reckless plans to take New Mexicans' hard-earned money to fund her eco-activism for reelection is very disingenuous to the people," Townsend said.

"There is nothing worse than having a politician with D.C. ambitions on the fourth floor, and this Governor knows no bounds to holding back on her ambitions to either return to D.C. or let her dark-money friends destroy New Mexico."

Energy industry advocacy group Power the Future sided with the GOP in arguing against a clean fuel standard that New Mexico-based spokesperson Larry Behrens said would favor electric cars and renewable energy over traditional oil and gas which were a major part of New Mexico's and the U.S.' economy and fuel supply.

"As with every other green agenda item put forward by this Administration, this is yet another Washington mandate that limits choice for our families," Behrens said.

"It's clear that President Biden is not willing to let American families choose for themselves because they might just choose to not buy into the green agenda."

