May 18, 2018

Dear Senators,

The undersigned organizations write to express our opposition to the nomination of Heidi King for Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). We are gravely concerned about Ms. King's ability to lead NHTSA, given her history of attempting to undermine critical oil conservation and, thus, environmental efforts during her tenure at NHTSA. Moreover, in her recent confirmation hearing, Ms. King was evasive when asked whether climate change is real and needs to be addressed. This is an unacceptable response from someone who, if confirmed, will be charged with implementing CAFE standards, a critical component in our country's efforts to reduce oil usage and working in concert with EPA regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.  King's record thus far shows, if confirmed, she will weaken the CAFE standards, threatening American consumers' pocketbooks, health and environment. For these reasons, we oppose Ms. King's nomination.

Ms. King's failure to acknowledge the existence of climate change, let alone the importance to address the problem, indicates she is not qualified to lead NHTSA.[1] Although she tried to say that she would listen to scientists, that is clearly not the case as the vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is happening, and humans are causing it.  This discrepancy is alarming and indicates to us that she is not listening to scientists on this critical topic and thus likely also not listening to scientists on additional topics that are in her agencies' purview.

The evidence of climate change is overwhelming. As we face record-breaking temperatures, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and longer and more severe droughts and wildfire seasons, we need a NHTSA Administrator who understands and acknowledges that the transportation sector is now the largest and fastest growing source of carbon emissions in the United States, and reducing these emissions is critical to combatting climate change.

NHTSA sets fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles and enforces the standards, including by fining auto companies that violate the rules.  However, based on available information about the current proposal for the fuel economy standards for model years 2021-2025, which Ms. King is overseeing, she has worked to weaken the CAFE standards and states' rights. She also oversaw a recently overturned attempt to lower the fines that automakers pay for missing the goals of the CAFE standards.

The importance of the CAFE standards to the public cannot be understated. Consumers can expect to save between $3,200-$4,800 over the lifetime of a new vehicle meeting the 2025 standards, even at low gas prices. As gas prices currently approach a three year high and are expected to continue to rise, the

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[1] https://www.ucsusa.org/clean_vehicles/smart-transportation-solutions/vehicle-policy/current-policies-and-legislation/how-to-reduce-us-oil-use.html

savings will be up to $8,200 per truck.[2][3][4] A recent Consumers Union survey found nearly 9 out of 10 consumers want automakers to continue to raise fuel efficiency.[5] Moreover, 2012-2025 standards are expected to cut our reliance on oil by 2.4 million barrels per day by 2030.[6] And annual carbon pollution in 2030 would be reduced by 570 million metric tons of $CO_2$, which is equivalent to the pollution from 85 million of today's cars or 140 coal-fired power plants.

Americans deserve a NHTSA administrator who acknowledges the established science of climate change and works to ensure that consumers continue to benefit from strong fuel economy standards.  We urge you to vote no on the nomination of Heidi King for NHTSA Administrator.

Sincerely,

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[2] https://gasprices.aaa.com/

[3] http://consumersunion.org/2016/09/new-cafe-standards-help-consumers-save-big/

[4] https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/24/gas-prices-are-near-a-three-year-high-heres-how-to-save-at-the-pump.html

[5] http://consumersunion.org/news/2017-fuel-economy-survey/

[6] https://www.nrdc.org/experts/luke-tonachel/clean-car-and-fuel-economy-standards-whats-next