

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 22, 2010

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

Earlier this year, you visited an ethanol production facility in Macon, Missouri to tout the economic and national security benefits of expanded ethanol production. We were all pleased to hear of your endorsement of ethanol's ability to contribute to our nation's economy and clean energy future. We share your support for homegrown biofuels.

You've aptly noted that reducing our dependence on foreign oil is the right thing to do for our security and that we can't afford to spin our wheels. In response to the tragic Deepwater Horizon oil spill, you issued a challenge to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels. You stated, "I am happy to look at other ideas and approaches from either party - as long they seriously tackle our addiction to fossil fuels... But the one approach I will not accept is inaction."

While your commitments in support of biofuels are encouraging, they are not matched by the actions of your administration, specifically by the Environmental Protection Agency. The fact is, simple steps could be taken in the very near term that would have a real impact on our dependence on foreign oil. Inexcusably, the EPA continues to delay and obstruct those efforts.

In March of 2009, a group of domestic ethanol producers filed a waiver petition with the EPA to allow for the use of up to 15 percent ethanol in gasoline (E15). In an effort to increase our use of homegrown, renewable fuels, as well as meeting the renewable fuels requirements set forth by Congress, ethanol must be allowed to be blended at levels higher than the current limit of 10 percent. While the EPA was required to act on this request by December 2009, in a letter to Growth Energy on November, 30, 2009, Assistant Administrator Gina McCarthy indicated that more studies were necessary to grant the waiver.

While we viewed this delay as unnecessary and unfortunate, it was accompanied by positive statements from Administrator McCarthy that testing would be concluded by May 2010. Further, in her letter, she stated: "Should the test results remain supportive and provide the necessary basis, we would be in a position to approve E15 for 2001 and newer vehicles by the mid-year timeframe."

Unfortunately, last week the EPA announced that a decision on the waiver petition would be further delayed until fall 2010. Not only is this further delay unacceptable, it was accompanied by an unnecessarily complicated waiver procedure that would provide a partial waiver for 2007 model vehicles and newer, followed by another partial waiver for vehicles manufactured in years 2001 and newer. EPA officials have further stated that with this new timeline, E15 blends may not be available to consumers until February 2011.

Without question, we find this delay unfounded and irresponsible. It's difficult to understand how another delay in approving higher ethanol blends could be considered "a significant step forward," as Secretary Vilsack claimed. Only in Washington, D.C. can nearly two years of study and evaluation be considered an expeditious process.

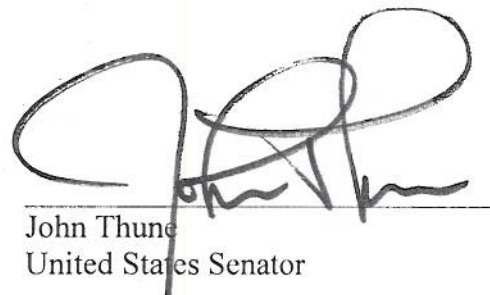
It's hard to understand how an administration that talks so adamantly about the benefits of domestic, renewable fuels can allow such delay and inaction. Domestic ethanol producers have concluded that approving E15 would create 136,000 U.S. jobs and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels by 7 billion gallons. Taking quick action to allow higher ethanol blends will fulfill your challenge to reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

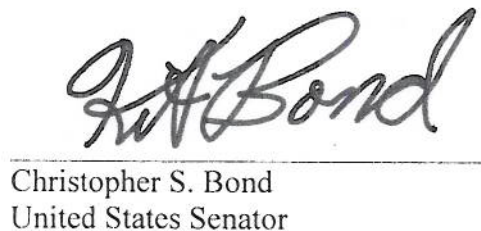
Therefore, we respectfully request that you promptly take all action necessary to consider this waiver petition without delay. In addition, your administration should immediately consider an interim blend of E12. It is our hope that you share our concern that the EPA's inaction on this issue should not be tolerated.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator


John Thune
United States Senator


Christopher S. Bond
United States Senator


Mike Johanns
United States Senator