

WASHINGTON, DC - Rep. Peter Welch hailed President Obama's decision Monday to direct the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider a waiver requested by California, Vermont and 12 other states that would allow them to set strict, new vehicle emissions standards.

Obama today reversed a December 2007 ruling by the Bush administration which denied states the right to demand tougher fuel efficiency standards than those set by the federal government. The president was also expected to direct the Department of Transportation to require a nationwide average fuel efficiency increase to 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

"Vermonters and all Americans have a right to cleaner air and more efficient vehicles. President Obama's decision to reject the Bush administration's politicized approach to air quality and to embrace a proactive approach to fighting climate change is a victory for consumers and a victory for the environment," Welch said. "At long last, our country is returning to a rational, science-based approach to governance. With this break from the misguided policies of the Bush administration, we are on the road toward a cleaner, brighter future."

Earlier this month, Welch and Rep. Brad Sherman (CA-27) reintroduced the Right to Clean Vehicles Act, a bill they wrote in March 2008 that would have overturned the EPA's denial of California's waiver request. The 2008 bill was cosponsored by 58 members of Congress, and similar legislation was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Barbara Boxer (CA) and was cosponsored by Vermont Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders.

In September 2007, Welch rallied 89 members of Congress to urge the EPA to promptly grant the California waiver. Earlier that year, he led a successful effort in Congress to block a proposal being considered by the House Energy and Commerce Committee that would have prohibited states like Vermont from adopting emissions standards that are tougher than those imposed by the federal government.