

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to request a meeting with you and members of your Cabinet regarding your energy and environmental agenda. Specifically, we seek an audience to discuss the tremendous opportunity that biofuels like ethanol and biodiesel present to bolster affordable American energy, underpin a strong agricultural economy, and immediately lower transportation emissions using the existing consumer vehicle fleet and fueling infrastructure. Unfortunately, the promise of homegrown biofuels and our agriculture sector appear to be woefully underrepresented in your administration's energy, environmental, and transportation agenda.

You have made clear your interest in going all-in on electric vehicles (EVs) despite the outstanding costs, critical mineral constraints and related labor exploitation, electricity generation and transmission demands, consumer needs, and other unresolved aspects of this ambition. While we recognize that EVs will eventually play an increased role in America's transportation and energy future, and that American innovation and ingenuity will overcome some of the hurdles faced by this nascent industry, we urge you to not look beyond the current generation of biofuels technology and forgo the meaningful reduction in carbon emissions they can provide. Recent studies have found corn ethanol to have 46 percent lower lifecycle emissions than gasoline,<sup>1</sup> and proven advancements like ethanol derived from corn kernel fiber, when combined with increasingly efficient farming practices, can reduce lifecycle emissions as much as 70 percent.<sup>2</sup> Expanded investment in carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) will further lower the lifecycle carbon intensity of biofuels, approaching net-zero or even net-negative emissions.

We hope to discuss with you immediate and intermediate steps your administration can take to feature American agriculture and biofuels as part of your energy and environmental agenda. Two foundational actions would be to direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to adopt modern greenhouse gas modeling for renewable fuels (specifically, Argonne National Laboratory's Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Transportation (GREET) Model) and approve long-stalled registrations for advanced, cleaner fuels. These two straightforward acts would acknowledge that modern farming practices and the domestic research and private investment spurred by the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) have produced cleaner fuels and reduced emissions—an acknowledgement that would spur expanded utilization of these low carbon fuels.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abde08/pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17597269.2018.1546488>

Through formally recognizing the reduced carbon emissions of American biofuels and enabling greater utilization of advanced biofuels on the U.S. market, your administration can also foster expanded export opportunities to countries like the United Kingdom and India that are implementing clean fuel standards and other programs to lower their transportation emissions. Homegrown, American biofuels are a prime candidate for reducing our trade deficits, and updating EPA's modeling and advancing fuel registrations, which can simply be done through administrative action, can help unlock this potential. Additionally, updated and current modeling across related industries and for associated feedstocks will further highlight the environmental contributions of the bio-based economy. Modern technologies should be evaluated on a level playing field, and we are confident that the many environmental and economic benefits of biotechnologies and efficient agriculture, especially biofuels, will be self-evident when scored fairly.

Further, the administration can maximize near-term emissions reductions through its support for biofuel blending infrastructure, expanding on the efforts of the Department of Agriculture. We were dismayed to see the administration first promote in its infrastructure proposal \$174 billion in EV investment compared to a substantially smaller \$15 billion program for which renewable fuels would be one of numerous competing technologies.<sup>3</sup> If the administration is serious about achieving near-term emissions reductions in the transportation sector, it should support, at a minimum, investment parity for biofuel technologies and policies like CCUS that will further lower the lifecycle carbon intensity of fuels. EPA has approved over 97 percent of the vehicles on the road today to run on E15 fuel; the administration should take aggressive action to enable millions of American drivers to reduce their emissions via higher biofuel blends, including year-round access to E15 and reducing other regulatory hurdles.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, the administration should rigorously implement and enforce the RFS in accordance with Congress' clear intent, restoring integrity to the program. Recent court proceedings have sought to undermine the RFS by expanding opportunities for oil refineries to evade their blending obligations via small refinery exemptions (SREs)<sup>5</sup> and by contesting the ability to sell E15 fuel year-round.<sup>6</sup> EPA should require SRE petitioners to prove an actual "disproportionate economic hardship" for compliance costs that are not ultimately recovered by the petitioner, and EPA should put forth robust, timely renewable volume obligations that reallocate any gallons waived by SREs. Of course, blending targets can be more easily met—and the associated credits (renewable identification numbers) more easily obtained—through the higher rates of blending afforded by year-round E15.

Mr. President, these are but a few administrative actions you can direct to further advance American energy security, expand consumer access to affordable energy, and reinforce gains in environmental stewardship, all while supporting a rural economy that looks forward to capitalizing on its full potential. We look forward to the prospect of discussing these policies with you and leaders of your administration to ensure they are quickly incorporated in your ongoing deliberations. Given the bipartisan support for biofuels and leveraging the agricultural

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-pitch-his-174-blm-electric-vehicle-plan-michigan-2021-05-18/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/ethanol\\_e15.html](https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/ethanol_e15.html)


<sup>5</sup> [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/20pdf/20-472\\_0pm1.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/20pdf/20-472_0pm1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/D33AF132E64A3D1E85258706005062EC/\\$file/19-1124-1904888.pdf](https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/D33AF132E64A3D1E85258706005062EC/$file/19-1124-1904888.pdf)


economy as energy and environmental solutions, including the aforementioned policies, we would welcome including our Democratic colleagues in such a dialogue.

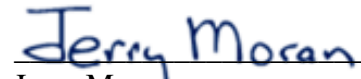
Thank you for your timely attention to these matters. We hope you will take the necessary action to utilize homegrown biofuels as an American energy solution and look forward to a productive discussion.


Sincerely,


  
John Thune  
United States Senator

  
Chuck Grassley  
United States Senator

  
Roy Blunt  
United States Senator


  
Jerry Moran  
United States Senator

  
Deb Fischer  
United States Senator

  
M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator

  
Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

  
Ben Sasse  
United States Senator

  
Roger Marshall, M.D.  
United States Senator

cc:

- The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
- The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation
- The Honorable Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy
- The Honorable Michael Regan, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
- The Honorable Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative
- The Honorable John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate