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Press Release - Senator Edmund S. Muskie on General Motors and Auto Emissions Standards

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FOR RELEASE

18 January 1972

Senator Edmund S. Muskie released today the following statement concerning auto emission deadlines and the General Motors request for a one-year extension.

I am informed that the General Motors Corporation has filed a request for a one-year extension of the 1975 auto emissions deadline set by the Clean Air Act of 1970.

The request, I am told, was filed January 12, 1972, with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. To this moment, Mr. Ruckelshaus has failed to announce the news.

It is inexcusable, another example of the secrecy-in-government for which the Nixon Administration is so well known.

Under the law, the Administrator must decide within 60 days whether he will grant or refuse the one-year extension. Already a week has gone by.

Further, the law requires the Administrator, within those 60 days, to hold a public hearing on the General Motors request. The public has yet to receive notice of the hearing from Mr. Ruckelshaus. Already a week has been lost.

The Administrator has plenty of work to do in the seven weeks that remain. Under the law, before he may approve a one-year extension, he must find:

1. The extension is essential to the public interest or the public health and welfare of the United States;
2. The applicant has made all good faith efforts to meet the 1975 model standards for emissions of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide.
3. The applicant has proved that effective controls have not been available long enough to permit the applicant to meet the 1975 deadline; and
4. The National Academy of Sciences has failed to show that technology, processes, or other alternatives are available to meet the deadline.

Let me review the events, as I understand them, since January 1, 1972, the earliest date on which any auto maker could apply for the one-year extension:

The second report of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Motor Vehicle Emissions was due on December 31, 1971. A copy addressed to me was dated January 4, 1972. The report indicated that under certain conditions the larger manufacturers might comply with the 1975 date.

On January 12, 1972, General Motors filed its request for an extension with the EPA Administrator. From that time until I was informed, the request was withheld from the public.

I am deeply disturbed that the Administrator has failed to make public the request. And I am surprised that the largest manufacturer, with the shortest lead time in the industry, is the first to apply for an extension.

I urge Mr. Ruckelshaus to move quickly to repair the damage done to public confidence in his agency and the regulatory process. And I remind him of the testimony he gave at his confirmation hearing:

"... I would hold the automobile industry to the strictest possible proof to show and convince me that they had done everything in their power to comply with those standards and that they had not been able to achieve a device that would do that."