

At the 2018 ACT Expo green transport conference in Long Beach, California, last week, representatives from UPS, Navistar, and Cummins joined with speakers from Honda and the California Air Resources Board to express support for the fuel economy standards put in place by the Obama administration.



“We have invested millions and we continue to invest” in clean technologies aimed at meeting the Obama-era standards, said Steve Gilligan, vice president of product marketing for Navistar. “We assume we will stay the course,” he said. The remarks by the manufacturers were greeted enthusiastically by an audience made up largely of trucking companies, truck and engine manufacturing executives, and clean truck technology and fuel developers, reports Trucks.com

You might think truck manufacturers aren't much concerned with fuel economy, but you would be wrong. Fleet managers make buying decisions based on differences in fuel economy of a few tenths of a mile per gallon. Fuel for the big rigs is often one of the largest expenses associated with operating a fleet of trucks. Not only that, but truck customers also want fuel efficient trucks to burnish their image as a “green” business, which is something their customers care deeply about.

“We get inquiries from our largest customers constantly about doing their deliveries with low and zero emission vehicles,” says Tamara Baker, chief sustainability officer and vice president of environmental affairs for UPS. As more people flock to cities, online purchases — most of which are delivered by truck — are driving a surge in short haul trucking demand.

Mostly what the trucking industry is concerned about is the extra costs that will follow if the US has two fuel economy standards — one for California and the other 13 states that piggy back on its regulations and another for the rest of the country. Having to comply with more than one set of rules “adds complexity and costs and drives uncertainty,” says Julie Furber, executive director of electrification at Cummins, whose major business is supplying engines for trucks.

James Burrell, assistant vice president of American Honda’s advanced powertrain group, agrees. He says car companies need a single standard in order to determine which technologies to pursue. Complying with regulations costs money. Complying with two sets of regulations cost even more money. Those costs are inevitably reflected in the prices manufacturers charge for their products.

California and 16 other states have [filed suit in federal court](#) challenging Scott Pruitt’s decision to reopen the fuel economy rules. Tesla and several US utility companies have banded together to form the National Coalition for Advanced Transportation. According to a report in [Law360](#)

, that group has now filed its own legal action challenging Pruitt and the EPA.

Most of those in attendance at the 2018 ACT Expo seemed to believe the Trumpies — and Pruitt in particular — would get their heads handed to them in court. The [Administrative Procedure Act](#) sets out specifically what government agencies must and must not do when creating or dismantling regulations. Pruitt and the EPA have done none of them.

It should be a slam dunk for the plaintiffs, but nothing in the law is ever predictable and the US Supreme Court has taken very Trump-friendly positions so far. The Koch Brothers and their co-conspirators have packed the USSC with hand-picked minions who have sworn to do their bidding. This fight is a long way from being over.

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