



November 19, 2012

Honorable John D. Rockefeller, Chair
Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Fred Upton, Chair
Honorable Henry Waxman, Vice Chair
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request For Hearing On Hyundai-MPG Scandal

Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen:

Americans deserve to know the whole truth when the fuel economy claims of a large number of vehicles have been misstated by one of the world's largest automakers for the first time in American history.

One year ago, in response to consumer complaints, Consumer Watchdog sent a letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) expressing concerns about the fuel economy MPG (miles per gallon) estimates advertised on the EPA window sticker of the Hyundai Elantra and requesting that the EPA re-test the Elantra. In January 2012, after it appeared that the EPA would not perform the testing, Consumer Watchdog then called upon the White House to direct the EPA to conduct such an audit. Earlier this month, on the Friday before the presidential election, the EPA issued a brief press release announcing that it had required Hyundai and Kia to lower MPG estimates and change the window stickers for the Elantra and "for the majority of their model year 2012 and 2013 models after EPA testing found discrepancies between agency results and data submitted by the company."

According to the EPA announcement, "EPA's audit testing occasionally uncovers individual vehicles whose label values are incorrect and requires that the manufacturer re-label the vehicle. This has happened twice since 2000. This is the first time where a large number of vehicles from the same manufacturer have deviated so significantly."

As we wrote to President Obama in January, Hyundai's deceptive MPG estimates have greatly disadvantaged American automakers, as well as the American taxpayer, whose full faith and credit have financially sustained those companies.

We call upon you to hold hearings to give the American people more information about the Hyundai-MPG scandal.

Unbeknownst to most Americans, automakers self-test their vehicles to determine the EPA MPG claim that appears on the EPA-mandated window sticker. Elantra drivers alerted us to the fact that their MPG experience was very different than the promised “EPA” numbers.

The “40 Mile Per Gallon Elantra” was the centerpiece of a massive television, print and radio advertising campaign aimed at convincing drivers that they would save money with \$4 per gallon gasoline, when in fact drivers were routinely getting ten miles per gallon less than advertised. Hyundai widely advertised and promoted its four vehicles that received 40 miles per gallon -- the Elantra, Sonata Hybrid, Accent and Veloster – but all were reported by the EPA as having falsified MPG estimates on their window stickers.

We urge you to hold hearings in order to ascertain how Hyundai arrived at its “40 Mile Per Gallon” claims and whether the South Korean company’s business strategy led to falsified mileage estimates submitted to the EPA and incorrect window stickers. The consequence of the incorrect window stickers has been a loss in sales by American car manufacturers whose MPG window stickers have not been found to be false and who played by the rules.

We believe the companies’ chief executive officers should be put under oath and documents related to the testing should be subpoenaed in an effort to understand the cause of the false mileage estimates and window stickers. The false testing that led to the conveniently round “40 mile per gallon” numbers on the window stickers of four vehicles is very likely to have its roots in a marketing decision at the highest levels of the company. Hyundai/Kia drivers and the American people deserve to know the truth and have those involved answer questions on the matter.

We appreciate your consideration and stand ready to assist in any investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Court". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jamie Court
President, Consumer Watchdog