

**TESTIMONY OF MARTIN BARBRE
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION
EPA HEARING ON THE RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARD
JUNE 25, 2015, KANSAS CITY
As Prepared**

My name is Martin Barbre. I am a corn farmer from Carmi, Illinois, where I farm with my son, Brandon, growing field corn, white food-grade corn, soybeans, seed soybeans, wheat, grain sorghum and alfalfa.

It's great to have my son farming, and building new markets for corn, like ethanol, help farms have active roles for the next generation.

I also am proud to serve as chairman of the National Corn Growers Association, a national trade association that represents 42,000 dues-paying corn growers and the interests of more than 300,000 farmers who contribute through corn checkoff programs in their states.

NCGA and its 48 affiliated state associations and checkoff organizations work together to help protect and advance corn growers' interests.

In January 2014, when I served as president of NCGA, I submitted our organization's comments on the EPA's earlier proposal regarding RVO numbers and methodology for 2014. What I shared still holds true today.

The RFS is an important tool in the nation's effort to achieve cleaner fuels. Since the enactment of RFS2 in 2007, corn and corn ethanol production have increased in efficiencies and reduced greenhouse emissions faster than expected. At the same time, remarkably, the opposite happened with the oil industry. Petroleum production practices have gotten worse.

Until the EPA proposed changes to the renewable volume obligation for 2014, the RFS was doing exactly what it was intended to do -- driving adoption of domestic renewable fuel alternatives to petroleum, supporting jobs across the country, and ensuring the United States remains a global leader in developing new renewable energy sources while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions here at home. The EPA's proposal threatens these outcomes.

At the same time, we are extremely concerned about the methodology behind your decision. The EPA only has the authority to issue a waiver when reviewing the RVOs if either the RFS would cause "severe economic harm" to the economy or the environment, or if there is an inadequate domestic supply.

When it comes to ethanol, neither of these hold true.

The so-called “blend wall” is coming down. E15 is becoming more and more available, now at hundreds of gas stations around the country, and we are working and investing in programs to expand its availability even further.

We urge you not to penalize those of us who are doing our job, but to move quickly to ensure that the oil industry does its part to ensure that the infrastructure is in place, and renewable fuel is marketed as it is supposed to be.

In fact, a report last year from the Renewable Fuels Association demonstrated clearly how the oil industry prevents and discourages retail gas stations from selling fuels with higher renewable content, like E15 and E85. Unbranded or independent stations are roughly four to six times more likely to offer E85 and 40 times more likely to offer E15 than stations carrying a “Big Five” oil brand. We need to end this monopoly and continue our work to bring domestic, renewable fuels to our gas tanks.

Not only does our environment need renewable fuels, but consumers need the option at the pump to save their hard earned dollars. While Big Oil argues that RINs have increased prices for consumers, their argument falls flat. RINs are free for refiners who purchase and blend required volumes of ethanol with gasoline.

Only those refiners who blatantly refuse to blend required ethanol volumes have a need to buy RINs on the open market; and in the highly competitive gasoline marketplace, there is no way they can pass those costs on to consumers and remain competitive. RINs are what makes the RFS work – driving infrastructure investment, just as designed by Congress – and the proof is the significant decline in RIN prices following announcement of the EPA proposal in May.

We urge the Agency to restore the RVOs to statute, and support this important piece of transformational energy policy. The continued health of the rural economy and the nation’s environmental improvements hinge upon your decision.

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