



Sierra Club opposition to Senate Bill 814

RE: Senate Bill 814 “Ethanol Tax Credits”

On behalf of our 150,000 members and supporters in Michigan, we are writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 814. This committee should not push for ethanol at the expense of real action to address the climate crisis.

Now is the time to push hard for real climate solutions, not the time to back old and discredited ideas. E-15 consists of 85% gasoline and 15% ethanol. It is not a serious solution to climate change, and it is also not a solution to rising fuel prices. Ethanol was developed as an economic development tool, but it is now being advertised as a pro-climate alternative, even by some who make this argument in bad faith are well known climate deniers. We are out of time for fake solutions to the climate crisis.

Any review of current climate science and technological advancement shows that the case for ethanol is functionally irrelevant, because electric vehicles have advanced to the point where the Big Three are committed to a fully-electric EV shift. To address climate impacts and lower gas prices, moving into a fully electric vehicle future is far superior. EVs are already significantly less polluting today. According to a recent [report published by the Zero Emission Transportation Association \(ZETA\)](#) electric vehicles are now three to six times cheaper to drive in the US as gas prices are getting higher and more volatile. This isn't news. We all know this.

If we are concerned about high gas prices, it would behoove this legislature to invest heavily in non-motorized and public transit alternatives so people don't have to drive everywhere for everything. That means real investments in transit, walking and biking, as well as land use reforms and incentives to allow for remote-working as desired. Such investments are proven to have a huge return on investment (ROI) for access to jobs, public health, public safety, racial and economic equity, economic competitiveness, housing affordability and ability to retain young workers.

Furthermore, ethanol production pollutes more than electricity generation - and it always will. We must consider the full lifecycle emissions impact of ethanol production. This should include climate pollution that comes from the production of biofuels including direct and indirect land-use changes. Increased use of corn ethanol across the country has contributed to the conversion of more than 7 million acres of grassland and other habitats into crop production—the last thing we should be doing is doubling down on this failed policy outcome.

We must not give credits to an environmentally destructive fuel. Excessive nutrient runoff from increased agricultural production has also contributed to severe algal blooms in water bodies including the Great Lakes. Furthermore, [research, which was funded in part by the National Wildlife Federation and U.S. Department of Energy found](#) that ethanol is likely “at least 24% more carbon-intensive than gasoline due to emissions resulting from land use changes to grow corn, along with processing and combustion.”

In 2022, why would we be giving credits to support this? There are other ways to support our farmers outside of this, including incentivizing crop rotation, including growing more fruits and vegetables, and working to develop new industries to make products from hemp. We should be financing to assist farmers in making the transition and implementing the changes.

This bill does have the potential to be scored on Sierra Club's legislative scorecard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Minotas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "M".

Tim Minotas
Deputy Legislative and Political Director
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter