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Millions put in Birmingham Area Consumers' Pockets by Alabama Environmental Management Commission Action

MONTGOMERY – A better scientific understanding of how the air pollutant ozone is formed prompted the Alabama Environmental Management Commission (AEMC) to eliminate the requirement that Birmingham area consumers use a costly special blend of gasoline during the summer months. The special blend, also called “boutique” gasoline, has been required in the Birmingham area and other urban areas around the county for approximately 10 years. Originally put in place to improve air quality in urban areas, the special blend gasoline has recently been found to have virtually no impact on improving Alabama’s air quality yet it increases the fuel costs of consumers by about 5 cents per gallon.

The AEMC acted at its February meeting in hopes that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would grant approval in time to avoid having to use the special blend gasoline during the upcoming summer months. Although the EPA approval process normally takes at least six months, which would not have been in time to help area consumers this year, the EPA unexpectedly published its approval of the change today and, in a rare move, authorized its implementation immediately.

Elimination of the requirements for the special blend of gasoline will result in lower fuel costs in the Birmingham area this summer and will put millions of dollars in the pockets of Birmingham area consumers. In addition, by approving Alabama’s action EPA has paved the way for the implementation of similar actions across the nation, which could add hundreds of millions of dollars to the pockets of consumers.

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