

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2015

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings:

In light of recent and troubling reports regarding the use of so-called “defeat devices” in an estimated 500,000 vehicles sold in the U.S. by Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft, Volkswagen Group of America, and its subsidiaries (Volkswagen), I respectfully request that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convene a hearing to fully understand the implications and consequences of Volkswagen’s actions for American consumers and to identify potential policy solutions for federal agencies to prevent similar egregious actions from occurring again.

By Volkswagen’s own admission during a September 3, 2015, meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB), vehicles were designed and manufactured with technology to “bypass, defeat, or render inoperative elements of the vehicles’ emission control system.” In our opinion, such malfeasance is completely unacceptable to the American consumer, and is likely a violation of federal law.

According to a preliminary analysis by the Congressional Research Service, recent revelations about Volkswagen’s inappropriate use of technology in vehicles sold in the U.S. is not the first time automakers have used defeat devices to skirt environmental regulations. Other cases where EPA has accused manufacturers of installing defeat devices include Volkswagen (1973), Chrysler (1973), General Motors (1995), and Hyundai/Kia (2014); heavy-duty engine manufacturers Caterpillar, Cummins, Detroit Diesel, Mack, Navistar, Renault and Volvo (1998); and parts manufacturers Casper's Electronics (2013) and Edge Products (2013). Similarly, in 1998, EPA and the Justice Department (DOJ) settled with Honda and Ford for record fines and pollution mitigation.

Clearly, there appears to be a growing and pervasive disregard for consumer safety, public health, and environmental protections by some within the auto industry. By convening a hearing on the implications of deceptive practices within the auto industry, the Committee can thoughtfully consider the negative consequences for U.S. taxpayers, auto workers, and federal regulatory agencies, and determine if adequate protections are in place to minimize or eliminate future occurrences.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of my request and look forward to working with you to address this important issue. If you have any questions or concern, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Copeland in my Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark DeSaulnier". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent and the last name "DeSaulnier" written in a cursive-like script.

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie Watson Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Bonnie" being the most legible part.

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brendan F. Boyle". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Brendan" being the most legible part.

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress