

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

February 13, 2019

Andrew Wheeler  
Acting Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Acting Administrator Wheeler:

In the wake of the U.S. government shutdown for the longest period in history, I am concerned with Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to timely complete the rule to allow E15 fuel—gasoline containing as much as 15 percent ethanol—to be sold year-round.

In October, President Trump committed the EPA to lift summer restrictions on ethanol blends up to E15. EPA must issue this rule by June 1, 2019, to ensure that E15 can be sold at retailers this summer. However, the shutdown created a month-long delay with the EPA rulemaking process and will require a more expeditious effort to complete it by this summer.

Illinois farmers are increasingly frustrated with continually shouldering the economic headwinds of decisions made in recent months by this Administration. For example, soybean exports have dropped precipitously due to irregular U.S. trade decisions, risking overseas market opportunities to our foreign competitors. Export pressures have required the Administration to issue public assistance-type relief to farmers and livestock producers, which were also interrupted due to the shutdown. Instead of preparing to implement the new farm bill, or providing farmers with programs and statistical reports that they need to prepare for spring, the shutdown caused the Administration to close offices, creating additional stress not only for farmers but also for rural staff that remained unpaid for the duration of the shutdown.

Net farm income has not been strong. With farm debt and servicing and production costs facing higher pressures, and market prospects for 2019 still unclear, EPA failure to complete this rule by the summer will only add to the uncertainty faced by the agriculture community.

I urge you to publically commit to completing this rule before June, and I urge you to outline the steps EPA will take to ensure the E15 rule will be finished by that time.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator