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IOGCC Launches Pre-Emptive Strike Against Browner.

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Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Carol Browner's proverbial spit in the face of the oil industry - scheduled for airing tonight on CBS - has already drawn return fire from a 29-state-strong oil and gas group.

In a CBS interview, "Ed Bradley on Assignment: Town Under Siege," - about a waste dump in Grand Bois, La., where Exxon claims it legally dumped oil wastes in 1994 but residents say it is making their children sick - Browner calls on Congress to tighten an old "loophole" in oil and gas waste regulation.

"Congress should revisit this loophole. ... Big oil got a sweetheart

deal," Browner said in the interview, according to a press release from CBS News.

"Every other U.S. industry must label its toxic waste as hazardous and closely track its movement; only the oil industry's waste is not regulated by federal authorities and can be dumped near towns and cities," she said.

But Frank Keating, Oklahoma governor and Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission chairman, said a two-year study done by EPA itself had found that states were effectively regulating oil and gas activities.

"Nothing has changed since the EPA's study, except that the states have developed stronger programs," Keating said in a statement Monday. "It seems as though EPA has chosen to ignore its own findings in favor of using scare tactics to support a power grab by the federal government."

Publicity surrounding the case has prompted Louisiana to craft new rules on waste disposal - a move that the industry fears will spread to other areas, even though there has been no problem.

But the solution is definitely not the "one-size-fits-all" federal approach called for by Browner, Keating said. The states can better tailor waste regulations to their diverse climate, geology, topography and priorities of local citizens than the feds, he said.

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