



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE  
ACTION FUND

## Global Warming is a Serious Public Health Concern

*Vote “Yes” on H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act.*

“Over the next few decades in the United States, climate change is likely to have a significant impact on health.”  
– Howard Frumkin, Director of the National Center for Environmental Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Climate change is already affecting public health across the globe. The World Health Organization estimates that climatic changes are already causing more than 150,000 deaths annually and substantial losses in quality of life due to diarrheal disease, malaria, malnutrition, and flooding. And the health impacts from climate change will likely increase over time. Some of these anticipated health impacts include:

- **Asthma and allergic diseases are likely to worsen.** Warmer temperatures favor the formation of ozone, which aggravates asthma; higher CO<sub>2</sub> and other climate changes may increase allergenic pollen formation.<sup>ii,iii,iv,v</sup>
- **Food and water-borne disease could increase.** Climate-related increases in natural disasters and warmer ambient temperatures could increase the burden of food- and water-borne diarrheal diseases.
- **Increased extreme weather events will directly impact health.** More frequent and severe heat waves,<sup>vi,vii</sup> hurricanes, wildfires, and floods will cause deaths and injury.<sup>viii</sup> Contact with contaminated floodwater,<sup>ix</sup> and displacement contribute to additional morbidity and mortality.

Climate change will magnify health disparities.<sup>x</sup> Our experience with natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. and Hurricane Mitch in Central America suggests that minorities and disadvantaged populations will suffer the most when extreme weather events increase.<sup>xi</sup> Poorer populations may lack adequate shelter or access to protective resources such as air conditioning,<sup>xii</sup> transportation, healthcare, and emergency assistance.

**But if we act soon – by passing the American Clean Energy and Security Act – we can help avoid some of the harshest consequences of climate change.** The solutions exist to significantly and cheaply cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions today, but Congress needs to enact an economy-wide emissions cap to really reach the reductions we need.

McKinsey & Company, the well-respected consulting firm, released an analysis in December 2007 that shows that there are **over 250 technologies available today** to start reducing U.S. emissions<sup>xiii</sup>. Many of these emission reduction measures also provide ancillary health benefits, such as reduced exposure to toxic air pollution. And, nearly 40 percent of these opportunities would not only **pay for themselves**, but also earn enough savings to largely offset the cost of more expensive options. And the report does not even consider the costs to society of not taking action on climate change, or the benefits of doing so.

**We have the solutions available today to slow, stop, and reverse climate change, but Congress must mobilize our economy if we are to achieve the reductions we need.**  
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Find more fact sheets, reports, and testimonies on climate and energy issues at [www.edf.org/ClimateAnswers](http://www.edf.org/ClimateAnswers).

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- <sup>i</sup> Frumkin testimony to the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, April 9, 2008
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- <sup>iv</sup> Bell M et al. Climate change, ambient ozone, and health in 50 US cities. *Climatic Change*. 2007;82:61-76.
- <sup>v</sup> U.S. EPA. Assessment of the Impacts of Global Change on Regional U.S. Air Quality: A Synthesis of Climate Change Impacts on Ground-Level Ozone (An Interim Report of the U.S. EPA Global Change Research Program). U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC, EPA/600/R-07/094F, 2009.
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- <sup>x</sup> Patz JA, McGeehin MA, Bernard SM, Ebi KL, Epstein PR, Grambsch A. et al 2000. Potential consequences of climate variability and change for human health in the United States. in: *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change* (National Assessment Synthesis Team, eds). U.S. Global Change Research Program. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 437–458.
- <sup>xi</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared. Washington DC, 2006: 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, S. Rept. 109-322.
- <sup>xii</sup> Klinenberg E. Heat wave: A social autopsy of disaster in Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 2002.
- <sup>xiii</sup> *Reducing US Greenhouse Gas Emissions: How Much at What Cost?*, conducted by McKinsey & Company and published jointly with the Conference Board in November, 2007 is available at: <http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/ccsi/greenhousegas.asp>