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October 7, 2010

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the millions of members, activists, and supporters our organizations represent, we urge you to oppose any legislation or other congressional action that blocks or interferes with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) implementation of the Clean Air Act. This is quite literally a matter of life and death. The Clean Air Act standards the EPA is required to issue in the coming years will save tens of thousands of lives, prevent millions of incidents of illness, and avoid many billions of dollars in health care costs, all while supporting continued job creation and economic growth.

As the EPA moves forward to do its job under existing law—taking long overdue action to curb conventional air pollutants, air toxics, and global warming pollution—we urge you to oppose all attempts to undermine these life-saving safeguards for the air we breathe. Instead, Congress must demand that the EPA carry out its responsibilities under the Clean Air Act to protect public health and welfare from existing and emerging threats.

This is exactly what Congress designed the Clean Air Act to do nearly 40 years ago. It is one of the best public health investments the nation has ever made. The EPA, in its periodic report to Congress assessing the costs and benefits of the law required by the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments concluded that, over its history, the Clean Air Act has saved hundreds of thousands of lives and avoided millions of incidents of illness. In its first 20 years alone, the Act prevented: 205,000 premature deaths; 21,000 cases of heart disease; 672,000 cases of chronic bronchitis; 843,000 asthma attacks; 18 million cases of child respiratory illness; and 189,000 cardiovascular hospitalizations. And actions to reduce air pollution saved the nation an estimated \$22 trillion in health care expenses and lost productivity at a cost of \$523 billion—a remarkable 40-1 benefit-cost ratio. Recent analysis estimates the *annual* economic benefit of air quality improvements attributable to the Clean Air Act at nearly \$2 trillion in 2010. Meanwhile, since enactment of the Clean Air Act, the U.S. GDP has tripled and household incomes are on average 45% higher.

This track record of success should be revered, not reversed. We urge you to stand up against the assault on our country's public health now being waged by some of the nation's biggest polluters.

Some of these polluters want Congress to block the EPA from curbing toxic air pollution from industrial boilers and other equipment—standards that are needed to curb hazardous air pollutants like mercury, lead, acid gases, and dioxins. Blocking these standards would sacrifice some 5,000 lives every year, condemning Americans to more lung disease, cancer, and other illnesses. In particular, it would condemn children to more neurological and developmental illnesses. Similar expected standards addressing toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants will save even more lives and are critical to protecting public health. (The Clean Air Act will need to be complemented by other measures to prevent health problems from coal plants, including federally enforceable coal ash requirements.)

Finally, it is essential that Congress allow the EPA to use the tools it provided the agency in passing the Clean Air Act to protect the public health and welfare from the devastating impact of climate change. Every year that big polluters are left unaccountable for the carbon pollution they dump into the air will result in more severe effects of global warming, now and into the future— including record high temperatures, more dangerous heat waves, more asthma attacks and respiratory disease, the spread of water-borne and insect-borne diseases, stronger and more dangerous storms, more severe droughts, and many other threats to our health and safety. These changes will fall most heavily on the poor, the very old, the very young, and the sick.

When Congress wrote the Clean Air Act 40 years ago, it directed the EPA to protect Americans not only from the air pollutants known at the time, but also to respond when evolving science demonstrates that new air pollutants endanger our health and welfare. The Clean Air Act specifically directs the EPA to act to protect the climate. After decades of delay, the country cannot afford to wait any longer. It is time to press forward with the tools available, even as we work towards the comprehensive climate and energy plan ultimately needed to turn the tide of global warming.

The Clean Air Act has been successful in reducing dozens of different air pollutants, thereby protecting the health and the environment of millions of Americans. Over these years, our economy has continued to demonstrate strong economic growth. Yet time and again industry has cried wolf and attempted to orchestrate special deals to avoid its responsibility for the pollution it pumps into our air. And time and again the industry predictions have proven false. After decades of delay, the American people deserve the cleaner air, better health, and saved lives that can be made possible by the Clean Air Act.

Once again, we urge you to protect and empower the EPA to fulfill its responsibilities under the Clean Air Act and to oppose any measure that would delay or block progress toward a healthier environment for all Americans.

Sincerely,

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