

## **PRESS RELEASE: Choosing Polluters Over Children's Health, NRDC**

### 123 US Lawmakers Support Polluters Over Health of Children

Attacks on Clean Air Act Updates Would Increase Air Pollution and Health Risks -Including Asthma - for Millions of American Children, Adults

WASHINGTON (January 27, 2011) – More than 24 million Americans with asthma, including over 7 million children, are at increased risk of adverse health consequences if 123 U.S. House members in 35 states are successful in preventing the US EPA from updating the Clean Air Act, according to data compiled by the Natural Resources Defense Council and released with Health Care Without Harm. The lawmakers collectively have received over \$27,292,000 from polluters, many of which have made stopping the EPA a high priority.

As of January 25, 123 U.S. House Members had cosponsored one or more pieces of legislation intended to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from reducing pollution from industrial plants and other sources. By blocking the EPA, the lawmakers would be allowing polluters to continue emitting unsafe amounts of cancer-causing toxic, soot and smog pollution from cement plants as well as unlimited amounts of carbon dioxide from most industrial plants.

The 123 Members of Congress co-sponsoring anti-EPA bills are in the following 35 states: Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Wyoming.

“Putting the EPA in a political stranglehold will sentence tens of thousands of people to debilitating, respiratory illnesses such as asthma, adding to the burden of chronic disease in the nation and increasing the financial burden to the health care system,” said Health Care Without Harm’s Climate Policy Coordinator Brenda Afzal, MS, RN. “Let’s be clear: If these lawmakers are successful in blocking the EPA from doing its job to cut life-threatening pollution, more asthma sufferers, particularly children, will wind up gasping for breath.”

Health Care Without Harm, one of nearly 300 national and local health groups and other organizations, recently called on Congress to fully support the EPA’s efforts to limit the pollution responsible for climate change, which increases a wide range of health risks, including exacerbated chronic health conditions such as asthma and respiratory diseases associated with smog pollution. Pollution from cement kilns includes cancer-causing toxic pollution, mercury, soot and smog-forming pollution.

“Our elected representatives should hold big polluters accountable, not help them block the strong safeguards that would protect our health and quality of life,” said Dan Lashof, an environmental scientist and Director of NRDC’s Climate Center. “Unfortunately, these bad air boosters— who collectively have taken over \$27 million in campaign contributions from big polluters during their careers – are choosing to stand up for the polluters instead of public health.

We think the scientists and experts at the EPA should decide what pollution limits are needed, not politicians whose careers have been supported by big polluters.”

“Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the most effective strategy for limiting these health effects,” stated Jeremy Hess, MD, MPH, FACEP, Assistant Professor and Assistant Research Director, Emergency Medicine; and Assistant Professor, Environmental Health, Emory Schools of Medicine and Public Health, Atlanta, GA. “ Moreover, several studies have demonstrated that many mitigation strategies can have significant health benefits apart from the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, making them a win-win from a health perspective.”

The groups highlighted several recently introduced bills that would abolish or otherwise block the EPA’s ability to set standards to protect public health from air pollution:

- Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., introduced a bill (H.R. 97) that would permanently block EPA from limiting carbon pollution.
- Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W. Va., introduced a bill (H.R. 199) that would block EPA from taking any action under the Clean Air Act to limit carbon and methane pollution, for two years.
- Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, introduced a bill (H.R. 153) that would prohibit EPA from developing or enforcing standards to limit carbon pollution.
- Rep. John Carter, R-Texas, has a introduced a resolution (H.J. RES. 9) that would permanently block the EPA from reducing the soot, mercury, cancer-causing toxic and smog-forming pollution that cement plants dump into the air

Carbon pollution is linked to asthma because it contributes to warmer temperatures, which make it easier for smog pollution to develop and harder to reduce it. Warmer temperatures are also associated with increased morbidity and mortality due to increased weather events, such as hurricanes and floods; the spread of disease-bearing vectors; and heat-related illnesses, all of which incur additional health care costs.

For a detailed chart of all U.S. House sponsors and co-sponsors of the anti-EPA legislation, go to <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/FINAL%20Bad%20Air%20Bill%20Table.pdf> on the Web.

In 2009, EPA scientists determined carbon pollution is a public health risk, including its role in worsening the smog pollution to which asthmatics are particularly vulnerable. Regarding the effects on air quality, agency experts say “The evidence concerning adverse air quality impacts provides strong and clear support for an endangerment finding. Increases in ambient ozone are expected to occur over broad areas of the country, and they are expected to increase serious adverse health effects in large population areas that are and may continue to be in nonattainment. The evaluation of the potential risks associated with increases in ozone in attainment areas also supports such a finding.” For the EPA’s full explanation, see

[http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment/downloads/Federal\\_Register-EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171-Dec.15-09.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment/downloads/Federal_Register-EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171-Dec.15-09.pdf).

Asthma prevalence estimates are from the American Lung Association's "Estimated Prevalence and Incidence of Lung Disease by Lung Association Territory" which can be found at <http://www.lungusa.org/finding-cures/our-research/trend-reports/estimated-prevalence.pdf>.

Estimates are by county, so figures for specific districts include counties wholly and partly in the district. Campaign contributions information is from Open Secrets (<http://www.OpenSecrets.org>) and Federal Election Commission (<http://www.fec.gov/disclosure.shtml>) reports of contributions from oil and gas, electric utility, and coal and mining sectors. Top donors in these categories oppose key EPA safeguards.

For more information:

NRDC's Climate Center Campaign Director Pete Altman has blogged:

[http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/choosing\\_polluters\\_over\\_childr.html](http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/choosing_polluters_over_childr.html)

Table listing Bad Air Bill co-sponsors and district-specific information:

<http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/paltman/FINAL%20Bad%20Air%20Bill%20Table.pdf>