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Doctors, Nurses other Health Professionals Urge Congress to Resist Efforts to Weaken the Clean Air Act

“Fulfill the promise of clean, healthy air for all Americans”

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 9, 2011) – Leading public health organizations announced today that 1,882 physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, certified asthma educators and other health and medical professionals from all 50 states and the District of Columbia sent a letter to President Obama, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives urging them to uphold the protections established in the Clean Air Act. The letter comes as the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on Rep. Upton’s (R-MI) bill proposing elimination of Clean Air Act protections.

“Air that is clean and safe to breathe is critical to the health of my patients,” said Al Rizzo, MD, Chair-elect of the American Lung Association and Director of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Christiana Hospital in Newark Delaware. “The American Lung Association urges Congress to reject any weakening changes to the Clean Air Act.”

“Communities across the nation still suffer from poor air quality. Low income families face the impacts of toxic air pollution every day. From smog causing asthma attacks to toxic mercury harming children’s neurological development, far too many people face a constant threat from the air they breathe and the impacts of climate change,” the letter states. The letter concludes, “resist any efforts to weaken, delay or block progress toward a healthier future for all Americans.”

Rep. Upton’s proposed legislation would rollback Clean Air Act protections that are in place to address the health impacts of carbon dioxide pollution and other greenhouse gas pollution, including protections upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. The bill blocks Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California, and other states from setting automobile greenhouse gas pollution standards. The bill would repeal at least eleven final actions taken to protect health and the environment under the Clean Air Act.

“Congress should heed advice from doctors, nurses and other health professionals to protect the public from dangerous air pollutants. The Clean Air Act has protected the health of millions of

Americans over the past forty years. We must take steps to move forward in public health protections not backwards,” said Peter Wilk, MD, Executive Director Physicians for Social Responsibility. “Congress must not repeal EPA’s clear scientific conclusion that six pollutants carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) threaten public health,” continued Dr. Wilk.

“Last year, the Clean Air Act, a landmark public health law, prevented an estimated 160,000 premature deaths and tens of thousands of adverse health effects – asthma attacks, heart attacks, emergency department visits and hospitalizations,” said Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA). “Attempts to remove protections already in place against health consequences of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas pollution must be stopped.”

The text of the letter is below and the list of all 1,882 signatures can be found [here](#).

Dear President/Senator/Representative,

As health and medical professionals, we are keenly aware of the health impacts of air pollution. Air pollution is linked to a wide range of health consequences including cancer, asthma attacks, heart attacks and strokes. The Clean Air Act guarantees all Americans, especially the most vulnerable, air that is safe and healthy to breathe. Despite tremendous air pollution reductions, more progress is needed to fulfill this promise. Please support the full implementation and enforcement of the Clean Air Act.

Throughout its four decade history protecting the public from air pollution, the Clean Air Act has enjoyed strong bi-partisan support. The original Clean Air Act and its subsequent amendments received overwhelming votes in Congress. This landmark public health law directed the Environmental Protection Agency to protect health and the environment from air pollution. The result is saved lives and improved quality of life for millions of Americans. But the job is not finished. Communities across the nation still suffer from poor air quality. Low income families face the impacts of toxic air pollution every day. From smog causing asthma attacks to toxic mercury harming children’s neurological development, far too many people face a constant threat from the air they breathe and the impacts of climate change.

Please fulfill the promise of clean, healthy air for all Americans to breathe. Support full implementation of the Clean Air Act and resist any efforts to weaken, delay or block progress toward a healthier future for all Americans.

Sincerely,

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About the American Lung Association

Now in its second century, the American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. With your generous support, the American Lung Association is “Fighting for Air” through research, education and advocacy. For more information about the American Lung Association, a Charity Navigator Four Star Charity and holder of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Guide Seal, or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit www.LungUSA.org.

About the American Public Health Association

Founded in 1872, the APHA is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association aims to protect all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and strives to assure community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States. APHA represents a broad array of health providers, educators, environmentalists, policy-makers and health officials at all levels working both within and outside governmental organizations and educational institutions. More information is available at www.apha.org.

About Physicians for Social Responsibility

PSR is the largest physician-led organization working to slow, stop and reverse global warming and the toxic degradation of the environment and to prevent the use or spread of nuclear weapons. PSR's 50,000 members and e-activists, 30 chapters and 14 national staff form a nationwide network that effectively targets threats to global survival.