

October 5th, 2011

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned, represent a broad array of faith-based organizations. Together, we urge you to oppose bills that aim to delay or block the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to safeguard our precious clean air and clean water under the Clean Air Act. As communities of faith, we are called to protect and serve God's great Creation and work for justice for all of God's people. We believe that the United States must take appropriate and available actions to ensure the health of its communities. We call on Congress to allow the EPA to use the best science to ensure that all people, including those living in poverty, who so often live in the shadows of polluting industries, are protected.

An August 29th legislative memo seeks the repeal of a number of recent and upcoming environmental safeguards that will protect public health by limiting dangerous pollutants like mercury, arsenic, soot, smog, carbon dioxide, and coal ash from the nation's largest pollution sources, including coal plants, oil refineries, and factories. These safeguards are two decades overdue, and are overwhelmingly supported, as exhaustive public hearings and public commenting have shown.

If passed, this legislation will not only ignore the public's desire for stronger pollution safeguards, but it will put tens of thousands of lives at risk, it will lead to more heart attacks, more respiratory illnesses, and more asthma events. Low-income people and communities of color often bear a greater burden of the effects of toxic pollution from power plants, as they live closer to the polluting facilities than most Americans and they are least able to afford the increased health care costs. Passing this legislation will mean more human exposure to toxic mercury, which poses particular risks to children. Each year, more than 300,000 children born in the US have levels of mercury in their blood high enough to impair performance on brain development test and permanently affect intelligence.¹ Addressing emissions of mercury and other toxics would have substantial annual health and economic benefits, including the prevention of as many as 17,000 premature deaths, 11,000 heart attacks and 120,000 asthma attacks².

The Clean Air Act, which has helped improve our air quality and human health since its passage in 1970, has been an invaluable tool to carry out our call to steward God's Earth. The recently proposed and upcoming improvements to the Clean Air Act can save thousands of lives. We urge you to reject the attack on public health protections and instead work together to focus on real solutions that grow the clean energy economy *and* protect the air we breathe and the water we drink.

¹ Trasande et al., 2005; Axelrad et al., 2007

² EPA 2011 fact sheet - www.epa.gov/airquality/powerplanttoxics/pdfs/overviewfactsheet.pdf

Signed:

National Faith Organizations

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)
Earth Ministry
Eco-Justice Ministries
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Federation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GreenFaith
Interfaith Power & Light
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
National Council of Churches USA
Presbyterians for Earth Care
Union for Reform Judaism

Regional/State Faith Organizations

Alabama Interfaith Power & Light
Alaska Interfaith Power & Light
Arkansas Interfaith Power & Light
Arizona Interfaith Power & Light
California Interfaith Power & Light
Colorado Interfaith Power & Light
Connecticut Interfaith Power & Light
Earthkeepers of Heartland
Presbytery, PCUSA
(Florida) Sunshine State Interfaith Power
& Light
Georgia Interfaith Power & Light
Greater Washington DC Interfaith Power
& Light
Hawaii Interfaith Power & Light
Illinois Interfaith Power & Light
(Indiana) Hoosier Interfaith Power &
Light
Kansas Interfaith Power & Light
Kentucky Interfaith Power & Light
Maine Interfaith Power & Light

Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light
Michigan Interfaith Power & Light
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light
Nebraska Interfaith Power & Light
New Mexico Interfaith Power & Light
New York Interfaith Power & Light
North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light
Ohio Interfaith Power & Light
Oklahoma Interfaith Power & Light
Oregon Interfaith Power & Light
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Rhode Island Interfaith Power & Light
South Carolina Interfaith Power & Light
Texas Interfaith Power & Light
Tennessee Interfaith Power & Light
Utah Interfaith Power & Light
Vermont Interfaith Power & Light
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Washington Interfaith Power & Light
Wisconsin Interfaith Power & Light