

Comité Cívico del Valle • Common Ground for Conservation •
Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norteamérica (COFEM) • Latino Coalition for a Healthy California •
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) • National Hispanic Environmental Council •
National Hispanic Medical Association • National Latino Coalition on Climate Change •
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association • National Puerto Rican Coalition •
Project Economic Refugee • Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services •
William C. Velazquez Institute • Voces Verdes

June 8, 2011

Dear President Barack Obama,

As members and leaders of the undersigned Latino organizations committed to efforts that support our community's health, economic advancement and well-being, and the concerned constituents who we represent, we are writing to express our deep support for strengthening our ground-level ozone, or smog, standards to the most protective levels possible.

Nearly half (48.8%) of all Hispanics in the United States live in smog nonattainment areas.¹ Since so many Latinos work outside in construction and agricultural trades, we are often at even greater risk of the damaging health impacts of smog. These are our children, grandparents, and siblings who are at risk of asthma, bronchitis and death due to this dangerous air pollutant. Therefore, Hispanics have a great deal at stake as updates to the standards are considered.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) science advisors have recommended unanimously that the smog standards be strengthened to between 60 and 70 parts per billion in order to protect the public's health, including that of the most vulnerable populations.

The EPA estimates that the strongest standard of 60 parts per billion would avoid as many as 12,000 deaths and 58,000 asthma attacks per year. Implementing a weaker standard would mean more lives lost and more asthma attacks – costs that Latinos would disproportionately bear.

The Latino community has faced many challenges over the past few years. We've seen missed opportunities, delays and more. With lives at stake, we hope that we won't see yet another burden if polluting industries succeed in blocking EPA's efforts to protect us from smog.

This is a chance to fix a costly mistake by the Bush administration, which in 2008 disregarded science and set smog standards too high to adequately protect public health. This issue is too important to have mistakes like this repeated.

We support strengthening national smog standards to the most protective levels recommended by EPA's science advisors and hope that the White House will do the same.

Sincerely,

Luis Olmedo, Executive Director
Comité Cívico del Valle

Mildred Real, CEO
Common Ground for Conservation

Arturo Carmona, Executive Director
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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, January 14, 2011, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/other/su6001.pdf>.