

November 15, 2010

Dear Senator:

As allies and representatives of low-income communities and communities of color, we are writing to urge you to oppose any legislation that would block President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from enforcing the Clean Air Act to fight global warming.

The Clean Air Act is a proven law with a nearly 40-year track record of protecting communities from dangerous pollution. The law's accomplishments include reducing children's exposure to toxic lead by phasing lead out of gasoline, achieving substantial reductions in dangerous smog and soot pollution in communities, and preserving waterways and our environment from damaging acid rain. In December 2009, EPA found that global warming pollutants endanger public health and welfare, and are covered under the Clean Air Act. Any attempt to delay acting to reduce the emission of these pollutants that cause and contribute to climate change and worsens the air quality problems in our communities is unacceptable.

Big polluters, like coal-fired power plants and oil refineries, dominate our energy sector and for decades have posed serious threats to public health and the environment, which are magnified for the nation's most vulnerable communities. Big polluters are disproportionately located in low-income communities and communities of color, and their localized air pollution places an immense burden on the health and well-being of the surrounding communities.

For example, a 2002 study by a coalition of environmental justice organizations found that 68 percent of African Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant – the distance within which people experience the maximum effects of smokestack emissions – compared with 56 percent of U.S. whites.¹ EPA found that climate change will intensify the impacts of that pollution. Requiring these power plants to reduce global warming pollution under the Clean Air Act is a key tool for protecting the health and well-being of the surrounding, often vulnerable communities.

Action against global warming is long overdue. Every year that we wait to address global warming, the impacts of global warming – record high temperatures, more severe droughts, stronger storms, heavier rainfall and flooding, and sea-level rise – continue to hit underserved communities first and worst. More frequent and intense heat waves increase the threats of asthma and other respiratory disease; more frequent and intense rainfall and flooding, and sea-level rise increase the threats of water-borne diseases. Low-income and minority communities often have less access to health care and less ability to incur the costs of global warming related disasters.

Any legislation that places a stop-work order on or blocks the Clean Air Act will severely jeopardize our ability to protect public health in our communities, fight global warming, and transition America to a clean energy economy. To protect public health and welfare, especially in our nation's most vulnerable communities, it is essential that President Obama and EPA use the Clean Air Act as a tool to reduce global warming pollution.

¹ *Air of Injustice: African Americans and Power Plant Pollution*, Black Leadership Forum, Clear The Air, Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda, The Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, October 2002

We urge you to oppose any legislation that restricts the Clean Air Act from addressing global warming.

Sincerely,

1Sky
350.org
African American Environmentalist Association
Africana Women's Studies at Bennett College for Women
Agri-Tech Producers, LLC
ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
American Cities Foundation
Bay Localize of the San Francisco Bay area
Campus Progress
Center for Food Safety
Center for Environment, Commerce & Energy
The Center for the Celebration of Creation
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Citizens Climate Lobby
Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin
Climate Collaboration Project of Corporate Ethics International
The Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life
Common Ground for Conservation
Conservation Law Foundation
The Corporation for Economic Opportunity
Dakota Resource Council
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Democracia Inc
Earth Day Network
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Environment Ohio
Fresh Energy
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Garfield Foundation
Global Exchange
The Greater Germantown Business Association, Inc.
Green For All
Greenpeace USA
GreenTreks Network, Inc.
Hazon
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
International Center for Technology Assessment
Jewish Vegetarians of North America
La Onda Verde de NRDC
Liberation Fellowship Church of Jesus
Liberation Fellowship Community Development Corporation
Local Clean Energy Alliance of the San Francisco Bay area
Louisiana Environmental Action Network

Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper
Low-Income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN) of Massachusetts
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Equal Justice Partners
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Minnesota Budget Project
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Montana Environmental Information Center
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low income clients
National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC)
National Latino Coalition on Climate Change (NLCCC)
National Wildlife Federation
Neighborhood Interfaith Movement
New Energy Economy of New Mexico
New Yorkers for Sustainable Energy Solutions Statewide
North Carolina Environmental Justice Network
Northeast Ohio Gas Accountability Project
Ohio-Meadville District of the Unitarian Universalist Association
Owego Revitalization Betterment Corporation (ORBC)
Oxfam America
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER)
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Plains Justice
Prosperity Works of New Mexico
Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
The Shalom Center
Sisters of Saint Joseph Earth Center
Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Summit Lake Association for Preservation
Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services
Tikkun/Network of Spiritual Progressives Congregation Shir Hadash
URI, Mid-Hudson Valley Cooperation Circle
The Utility Reform Network (TURN) of San Francisco
Valley Watch, Inc.
Veg Climate Alliance
Voces Verdes
Washington Association of Churches
Western North Carolina Alliance
Wittenberg Center for Alternative Resources
William C. Velasquez Institute
Woodberry & Associates