

New York Times LTE's
September 7, 2011
Obama Blocks an Air Pollution Rule

To the Editor:

Re "Obama Abandons a Stricter Limit on Air Pollution" (front page, Sept. 3):

How terribly shortsighted and reckless of President Obama to reverse a regulation that protects against the scourge of polluted air.

As the author of a book about the late Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, the principal founder of Earth Day, I am aware of how tirelessly he and others worked to secure legislation that would protect our air, water and land. The Clean Air Act is a prime example.

To reverse a regulation intended to cut down toxic emissions is to tamper with the health, safety and quality of life of present and future generations.

To quote Senator Nelson, "As we think about the richness of the world in which we live — its forests, its clear blue waters and all of its varied life forms — we must understand how our actions affect all of them."

SHEILA T. COHEN
Madison, Wis., Sept. 6, 2011

To the Editor:

I am heartbroken and horrified by President Obama's refusal to update smog standards. Updating the standards is long overdue, and such updates would have a highly beneficial effect on health care costs as well as pushing corporations to invest in the kind of essential technology and infrastructure needed to reduce pollution and create jobs.

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the president's action is that he appears to believe, and act on, the lies disseminated by the right, particularly members of the Tea Party, about the prohibitive cost of environmental protection, rather than acknowledging the truth: that the cost of not protecting the environment is overwhelming and irreversible.

What has happened to the passionate, committed man we elected?
EDWINA TRENTHAM

Moodus, Conn., Sept. 5, 2011

To the Editor:

“A Debate Arises on Job Creation vs. Environmental Regulation” (Business Day, Sept. 5) led with the recently withdrawn smog standard and then suggested that regulating now could be problematic in light of the economy’s weakness.

The withdrawn standard, however, would establish a goal for state air pollution programs and therefore produces no immediate costs at all.

Companies will incur costs only many years from now after states translate these goals into specific requirements for polluters. And if history is any guide, those costs will have a vanishingly small effect on employment, and some of that effect may be positive.

Environmental regulations account for less than one-tenth of 1 percent of mass layoffs. An administration seriously concerned about unemployment, rather than appeasing polluters and their allies, would focus its attention elsewhere.

The recession does not justify sacrificing thousands of lives by suspending a crucial health-protective standard being carried out many years hence.

DAVID M. DRIESEN
Syracuse, Sept. 5, 2011

The writer teaches environmental law at Syracuse University.

To the Editor:

Re “A Bad Call on Ozone” (editorial, Sept. 3):

Those of us in “the reality-based community” can only shake our heads in disgust as President Obama betrays one more of his principles.

Perhaps he can save all of us a lot of grief by simply announcing the principles he will abandon in his quest for re-election.

Better to be disgusted all at once than to have to suffer through this numbing drip, drip, drip of disheartening news as he abandons all that we thought he stood for.

LARRY BARKAN
Tempe, Ariz., Sept. 3, 2011