



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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December 4, 2012

Members

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

via fax & electronic mail

RE: NAACP SUPPORT FOR STRONG FEDERAL STANDARDS TO REDUCE SOOT EMISSIONS ACROSS THE NATION

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, I write to applaud efforts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce harmful emissions of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5})—or soot. When inhaled, soot can get deep into lungs and aggravate both respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Inhaling soot over long or even short periods of time can cause premature death, heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks, and may even cause cancer. All of these diseases are already suffered at disproportionate rates by African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, and thus the NAACP has a vested interest in reducing the amount of soot that contaminates our air every day.

In 2011, the independent Clean Air Scientific Advisory Board recommended that EPA strengthen the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for soot. This summer, EPA proposed to adopt more protective soot standards based on the latest and best available science.

Soot pollution consists of liquid and solid particles that generally include a mix of chemicals. Currently, the annual soot standard is 15 micro grams per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and the daily standard 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The proposed revisions would retain the daily standard and reduce the annual soot pollution limits to a range between 12-13 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The NAACP applauds this life-saving move forward and would welcome and even more protective annual standard of 11 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Low-income and racial and ethnic minority communities are disproportionately impacted by harmful and potentially carcinogenic air pollution.¹ According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, African Americans are three times more likely to be hospitalized with asthma and three more times likely to die of asthma complications than whites. Asthma is the number one health reason for missed school days and the fourth leading cause for missed adult work days. Chronic absences from school and work translate into reduced worker productivity and billions in health care costs. Additionally, chronic absenteeism due to asthma provides yet another barrier to quality education for students often experiencing other structural challenges to academic success.

Adopting soot reductions at the lowest proposed limits are projected by EPA to save the American people between \$2.3-5.9 billion annually in avoided health costs. For the most vulnerable populations, this means family and government healthcare cost savings in addition to an improved quality of life.

Thus, as I said earlier, the NAACP strongly supports EPA adoption of health protective soot limits by the end of 2012.

Thank you in advance for your attention to the NAACP position. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at (202) 463-2940.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary O. Shelton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hilary O. Shelton
Director, NAACP Washington Bureau &
Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy

ⁱZeger SL, Dominici F, McDermott A, Samet J. Mortality in the Medicare Population and Chronic Exposure to Fine Particulate Air Pollution in Urban Centers (2000-2005). *Environ Health Perspect* 2008; 116:1614-1619.