

June 21, 2012

MEMORANDUM

FROM: DAVID DI MARTINO

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POLLING DATA ON CLEAN AIR

More than 20 polls conducted across the country, including the industrial strongholds of Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, demonstrate that voters want politicians to protect the public health safeguards in the Clean Air Act and make sure that companies that pollute the air and water are held accountable for the harm they cause.

Yet, despite the clear and deep support from Americans who want clean, safe air, there are some in Congress who want to continue their war on public health by blocking and rolling back clean air protections and EPA's authority to hold polluters accountable.

On June 20, the US Senate conducted an historic vote rejecting the pro-polluter effort to block a significant clean air protection against mercury pollution. The EPA estimates that the standards will provide 46,000 short-term construction jobs and 8,000 long-term jobs to control the pollution filters. And, more than 90 percent of mercury emissions would be cut from power plants, sparing up to 11,000 premature deaths nationwide, 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 asthma attacks, 5,700 hospital and emergency room visits and 540,000 days when people miss school and work.

A review of public polling and polling over the past 18 months by Princeton Survey Research Associates, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Ayers McHenry Associates, Hart Research, Perception Insight, and Public Policy Polling demonstrates clearly that voters of all political affiliations and in all parts of the country support stronger air pollution limits; that they find the arguments against allowing EPA to update Clean Air Act standards to be unconvincing; and that they have little patience for Congressional attempts to prevent EPA from updating the standards.

NATIONAL POLLS SUPPORT STRONGER AIR POLLUTION LIMITS

The most recent poll conducted on this issue, by Princeton Survey Research Associates for United Technologies / *National Journal*, found that:

- 57 percent of the public supports the updated EPA standard controlling mercury and other toxic air pollution from coal fired power plants as long as companies are given more time to comply;
- 55 percent of the public, including 59 percent of independents, believe that EPA should be able to control greenhouse gas emissions that most scientists agree cause climate change;

Another recent poll on this issue, conducted from February 27 to March 4 by Greenberg Quinlan and Rosner and Perception Insight for the American Lung Association, found that:

- 73 percent believe that it is possible to protect our air quality and public health and have a strong economy with good jobs at the same time; we don't have to choose one over the other;
- 60 percent believe that strengthening safeguards against pollution will create more jobs because it will encourage innovation and investment in new technologies;
- 56 percent believe that the EPA should update clean air standards with stricter limits on air pollution; and

- 51 percent believe that although both are important, it is more important to protect clean air quality than it is to streamline unnecessary environmental regulations.

In addition, when asked about updating clean air standards that limit specific pollutants, the American Lung Association poll found that:

- 77 percent supported stricter limits on mercury released by power plants and other industrial facilities;
- 72 percent supported stricter limits on the amount of smog released by power plants, oil refineries, and other industrial facilities; and
- 70 percent supported stricter limits on the amount of carbon dioxide that power plants and other industrial facilities can release.

When asked specifically whether the EPA should set new limits on carbon emissions, 72 percent of those surveyed were in favor.

In Gallup's 2011 environment poll, released in March of 2011, 72 percent of respondents said that they worried "a great deal" or "a fair amount" about air pollution. And recent national polls and focus groups demonstrate that voters are both receptive to the idea of the EPA setting stronger air pollution limits nationwide and show little support for Congressional efforts to stand in the way. A June 2011 poll by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Moore Information (Greenberg / Moore) for the [American Lung Association](#) found that three quarters of voters surveyed believed that EPA should set tougher smog pollution standards – a finding that held across the political spectrum and in every region of the country. Also of interest was the finding that voters in regions potentially impacted by updated EPA regulations believe that stricter smog rules are more likely to create jobs than cost jobs.

These results were echoed in a January 2011 poll by ORC International for the Natural Resources Defense Council. The ORC International survey conducted in January of that year found that 63 percent of people surveyed believed that “the EPA needs to do more to hold polluters accountable and protect the air and water.”

There is Bipartisan Support for Stricter EPA Standards

A February 2012 poll by the Pew Research Center found that 50 percent of those surveyed, including 53 percent of independents, believed that the government should strengthen regulations around environmental protections.

In addition, a February 2011 poll by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Mc Henry and Associates (Greenberg / Mc Henry) found that 69 percent of voters think EPA should update the Clean Air Act standards, and that more than 75 percent of voters supported stricter limits on mercury, smog, and carbon dioxide.

Eighty-four percent of Democrats, 67 percent of independents, and 50 percent of Republicans agreed with that statement. In addition, majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents supported stricter limits on toxic chemicals. More than 60 percent of Republicans, 70 percent of independents, and 80 percent of Democrats support stricter limits on toxic chemicals, carbon dioxide, and smog.

Arguments In Favor Of Stronger Clean Air Standards Are Strong...

A September 2011 Public Opinion Strategies poll demonstrates strong majority support for EPA efforts to reduce industrial carbon pollution.

- 71 percent indicate support for requiring reductions in carbon emissions, including a solid majority of Republican voters.
- A majority of Republicans (55 percent), independents (72 percent) and Democrats (89 percent) support “the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requiring reductions in carbon emissions from sources like power plants, cars and factories in an effort to reduce global warming pollution.”

...And Voters Have Little Patience for Political Interference at the EPA

Voters have little patience for Congressional interference in EPA’s effort to update the standards, rejecting arguments that EPA is overstepping its bounds and that “government bureaucrats” shouldn’t decide what limits are needed. The ORC International survey conducted in January of 2011 found that 77 percent of people polled – including 61 percent of Republicans – believe that Congress should “let the EPA do its job.”

Again, these findings were echoed by the Greenberg / McHenry poll in February of 2011, which found that 68 percent of voters surveyed should not stop the EPA from updating clean air standards for mercury, smog, or carbon dioxide. The survey found that voters from most of the political spectrum reject Congressional action, including moderate Republican and Republican women, and that the only groups who support Congressional action are conservative Republicans, strong Tea Party supporters and Republican men. In addition, the Greenberg / McHenry poll found that only 18 percent of voters surveyed believed that EPA was exceeding its legal mandate.

These findings were confirmed in the United Technologies/*National Journal* Congressional Connection Poll from October of 2011, which asked respondents whether Congress should block the EPA rules intended to “limit emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide, and other pollutants from power plants.” The question noted that some people believe the rules are necessary “because these pollutants cause health problems like asthma and lung disease” while the “opponents say the regulations will raise the price of electricity and hurt the economy.” In response, 47 percent said Congress should allow the rules to go into effect, while 40 percent said it should block the regulations as the House voted to do.

The results were similar when the poll asked about pending EPA regulations “that would limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases that scientists have linked to global climate change.” The question noted that supporters argue that Washington “must limit these emissions because climate change is damaging the environment” while opponents “say the regulations will cost too much and that man-made climate change is an unproven theory.” Provided those arguments, 52 percent said Congress should allow the rules to take effect, while only 39 percent said it should block them.

Voters also rejected the idea that new Clean Air Act standards will hurt the economy. The Greenberg / Mc Henry poll also found that voters believe that updated EPA standards will boost, rather than harm, job creation by nearly a 20 point margin. In addition, protecting air quality was seen as a higher priority than “reducing regulations on businesses” by a 17 percent margin.

SUPPORT FOR CLEAN AIR STANDARDS STRONG AMONG HISPANICS

A 2012 Colorado College “State of the Rockies Conservation in the West” poll, released in January of 2012 and conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Metz, found that 83 percent of Hispanics believed that air pollution and smog were serious issues, and 81 percent of Hispanics support the EPA’s actions to curb pollution from coal-fired power plants and from other fossil fuels.

REGARDLESS OF REGION, SUPPORT FOR CLEAN AIR STANDARDS IS STRONG

Public Policy Polling has conducted more than 20 district level polls on clean air issues across the country, all of which have echoed the findings in the two national polls summarized above. However, the true power of the clean air issue becomes evident when reviewing polls conducted in January and February in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Even in these states, which have economies that have traditionally depended on manufacturing, steel production, coal mining, and other industrial activity, support for updating the Clean Air Act standards was overwhelming, most notably among independents.

Small Business Owners in Ohio

A poll conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Small Business Majority in March of 2012 found that 68 percent of the small business owners surveyed support the EPA’s new federal standard requiring new power plants to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, even though more than half (60 percent) believe the EPA’s regulation would have an impact on their business.

The poll also found that 74 percent of owners support updating EPA standards to reduce mercury, arsenic, chromium, nickel and acid gas emissions from new and existing power plants. What’s more, 46 percent strongly support these standards even though almost half (49%) say their business would be directly impacted by these standards.

Sixty-five percent of small business owners polled favored proposed standards to reduce smog and soot pollution crossing state lines and contributing to pollution in other states. Fifty-two percent of owners said that their businesses would see direct effects of these rules.

Maine, Ohio, and Pennsylvania

The most recent poll conducted by the ALA, released in March of 2012 and conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, looked specifically at the attitudes of voters in Maine, Ohio, and Pennsylvania on clean air issues.

	<i>Possible to protect our air quality and public health AND have a strong economy</i>	<i>Support EPA updating clean air standards with stricter limits on air pollution</i>	<i>Favor new limits on mercury emissions from power plants and industrial facilities</i>	<i>Favor new limits on carbon emissions from power plants and industrial facilities</i>
ME	72 percent agree or strongly agree	64 percent agree or strongly agree	80 percent agree or strongly agree	70 percent agree or strongly agree
OH	69 percent agree or strongly agree	57 percent agree or strongly agree	73 percent agree or strongly agree	65 percent agree or strongly agree
PA	73 percent agree or strongly agree	64 percent agree or strongly agree	74 percent agree or strongly agree	64 percent agree or strongly agree

When asked specifically if they favored the EPA setting new standards on carbon emissions, 71 percent of the voters in Maine, 63 percent of the voters in Ohio, and 69 percent of the voters in Pennsylvania stated that they did.

Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania

Those results were echoed in a February 2011 survey of 1500 voters in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio conducted by Hart Research. Sixty-four percent of voters favored the EPA setting new standards that limited carbon pollution from power plants and other industrial facilities.

There was strong support among independents for the new standards, with 57 percent of independents in favor. In addition, voters overwhelmingly trusted the EPA to make decisions on new Clean Air Act standards over Congress; 63 percent trusted the EPA, while only 18 percent trusted Congress. And when they were asked who should make the decision about air pollution standards, once again, the majority (59 percent) of voters chose the EPA, while only 25 percent chose Congress.

The Hart findings were echoed in district level polling in conducted by Public Policy Polling in February of 2011, providing further evidence that voter support for strong Clean Air Act standards transcends party affiliation and region.

	<i>Oppose effort to "block EPA from limiting carbon dioxide pollution"</i>	<i>Believe "EPA should move ahead to reduce carbon pollution without delay."</i>	<i>Believe "EPA scientists, not Congress, should decide what pollution limits are needed"</i>	<i>Believe "Congress should let the EPA do its job."</i>
MI-1 Benishek	62% 55% independents	66% 52% GOP 67% independents	74% 56% GOP 67% independents	69% 56% GOP 60% independents
MI-8 Rogers	64% 63% independents	67% 66% independents	77% 61% GOP 80% independents	74% 60% GOP 80% independents

Similar results were found in Ohio, where the trade, transportation, and utility sector employs approximately 18 percent of the state’s non-agricultural workforce.

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OH-8 Boehner	56% 51% independents	62% 55% independents	71% 60% GOP 67% independents	66% 56% GOP 60% independents
OH-12 Tiberi	65% 57% independents	67% 57% independents	73% 58% GOP 69% independents	69% 57% GOP 57% independents
OH-16 Renacci	59%	64% 50% independents	71% 57% GOP 62% independents	68% 52% GOP 62% independents

Pennsylvania, which also employs approximately 19 percent of the non-farm workforce in the trade, transportation, and utility sector, showed similar results.

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PA-4 Altmire	61% 56% independents	66% 52% independents 56% GOP	72% 64% independents 62% GOP	70% 60% independents 56% GOP
PA-6 Gerlach	72% 69% independents	76% 57% independents 74% GOP	78% 62% independents 72% GOP	76% 58% independents 67% GOP
PA-7 Meehan	76% 57% independents 80% GOP	80% 62% independents 76% GOP	84% 79% independents 79% GOP	70% 79% independents 82% GOP
PA-11 Barletta	70% 53% independents 58% GOP	79% 68% independents 69% GOP	82% 75% independents 76% GOP	79% 68% independents 72% GOP

A separate PPP poll, conducted for the Natural Resources Defense Council in February of 2011, had similar results.

	<i>EPA should “do more to hold polluters accountable and protect the air and water.”</i>	<i>Favors EPA settling stricter limits on air pollution</i>	<i>Congress should let the EPA do its job and decide when and how greenhouse gases should be regulated</i>	<i>Oppose Congress’ effort to block the EPA from limiting carbon dioxide pollution</i>
MI-6 Upton	61%	57%	67%	70%
PA-14 Doyle	77%	74%	74%	73%

OPPONENTS OF CLEAN AIR ARE MISSING THE MARK

Members of Congress opposed to updating Clean Air Act standards are quite simply missing the mark. Voters do not see the goal of “getting the economy moving and creating jobs”, which is the most important issue to them, as conflicting with the goal of keeping toxins and pollutants out of the air – and a majority of voters flatly reject the idea that the two goals are mutually exclusive. In fact, this research demonstrates that voters find all of the current arguments for delaying EPA action on Clean Air Act standards to be unconvincing.