

American Academy of Pediatrics • American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation • American Association of Respiratory Care • American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine • American College of Preventive Medicine • American Heart Association • American Lung Association • American Nurses Association • American Public Health Association • American Thoracic Society • Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America • Health Care Without Harm March of Dimes • National Assembly on School-Based Health Care • National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care • National Association of County and City Health Officials • National Home Oxygen Patients Association • Trust for America's Health

March 19, 2012

Dear Senator,

Our organizations write to express strong opposition to S.J. Res. 37, a resolution by Senator James Inhofe that employs the Congressional Review Act to reverse the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Mercury and Air Toxics Standards for Power Plants. If enacted, S.J. Res. 37 would not only nullify these life-saving standards, but would permanently block EPA from issuing any "substantially similar" mercury and air toxics protections in the future without express Congressional authorization. **Sen. Inhofe's resolution would leave millions of Americans permanently at risk from toxic air pollution from power plants that directly threaten pulmonary, cardiovascular and neurological health and development. We urge you to reject S.J. Res. 37.**

Over 21 years ago, Congress wisely directed EPA to reduce the public's exposure to toxic air pollutants through the 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act. The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards finally establish those long-overdue safeguards. At last, these standards will dramatically reduce more than 80 toxic air pollutants from the more than 600 coal- or oil-fired power plants operating in the United States. EPA estimates that this vital public health protection will have enormous health benefits, preventing up to 11,000 premature deaths, 130,000 asthma attacks, 4,700 heart attacks, and 5,700 hospital visits each year starting in 2016.

According to EPA, these new standards will eliminate more than 90 percent of mercury emissions from power plants – a significant step forward in protecting public health from the debilitating effects mercury can cause, especially in unborn children. Consumption by pregnant women of food containing mercury– even at low levels – can impact fetal neurodevelopment causing delays, learning disabilities and birth defects. Power plants are the largest industrial source of mercury found in the United States.

More than 75 percent of emissions of highly corrosive acid gas pollution (e.g., hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric acid) in the United States come from power plants. Acid gases can damage the skin, eyes, breathing passages and lungs, particularly in children who have narrower breathing passages, faster breathing rate and often spend more time outdoors than adults. In addition to mercury and acid gases, power plants emit over 80 other toxic substances. They include carcinogens such as arsenic, beryllium, chromium, dioxins and formaldehyde; toxic metals such as lead, manganese and nickel; and volatile organic compounds such as benzene and toluene. The extensive list of harm they produce ranges from a variety of cancers to damage to the neurological, gastrointestinal, immunological, hematological, reproductive and developmental systems.

To reduce these hazardous air pollutants, some power plants will need to install modern pollution control equipment or switch to cleaner fuels. Those changes will have an added benefit: reduced emissions of particulate matter, which are microscopic, deadly particles linked to heart attacks and strokes, asthma attacks, aggravation of other respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and premature death.

Only with these strong national standards and pollution control measures can human health be protected from these toxic pollutants. Children and other vulnerable individuals, including pregnant women, older adults, and people with lung disease, heart disease, or diabetes, will benefit immensely. EPA projects between \$3 and \$9 in health benefits for every \$1 spent in complying with the new standards. The benefits apply to people living in the shadow of power plants, and those living hundreds or thousands of miles from the power plant as toxic air pollution can travel far distances.

In fact, EPA's estimates likely understate the total benefits of cleaning up toxic air pollutants. EPA did not attempt to calculate the benefit of cleaning up most of the over 80 toxic emissions from these power plants. For example, they did not attempt to calculate the harm from the cancers these toxic emissions can cause or the damage to the kidneys, liver and reproductive systems. Those benefits would come on top of the benefits already included.

We trust you will agree with us that the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards provide much-needed public health benefits, and that these critical protections are already long-overdue.

Sen. Inhofe's resolution S.J. Res. 37 consciously elevates the demands of polluters above the health and well-being of our children. If passed, S.J. Res. 37 will force the public to continue breathing toxic air indefinitely. Therefore the undersigned health organizations **urge you to vote NO on S.J. Res. 37 and to speak out publicly against any efforts to block, weaken or delay these vital public health protections.**

Sincerely,

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