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February 2, 2012

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the undersigned public health and medical organizations, we write to state our strong opposition to any Congressional effort to hinder the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to protect public health through the Clean Air Act. Particularly as Congress considers payroll tax relief extension measures and other important legislative matters, we urge you to reject all amendments or policy riders that would prevent EPA from updating standards for life-threatening pollution under the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Air Act protects public health and reduces health care costs for all by preventing thousands of adverse health outcomes, including cancer, asthma attacks, strokes, heart attacks, emergency department visits, hospitalizations and premature deaths. A rigorous, peer reviewed analysis, *The Benefits and Costs of the Clean Air Act from 1990 to 2020*, conducted by EPA, found that the air quality improvements under the Clean Air Act will save \$2 trillion by 2020 and prevent at least 230,000 deaths annually.

Just last month, EPA finalized important new standards to reduce toxic air pollution from power plants, known as the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards which will reduce toxic mercury emissions from power plants by 90 percent, and greatly reduce other toxic metals such as arsenic, chromium and nickel that can cause cancer. The new standards will also dramatically reduce acid gas emissions from power plants that are linked to lung damage, and can worsen asthma, bronchitis and other chronic respiratory diseases. The standards will also reduce particle pollution and prevent 11,000 premature deaths and tens of thousands of heart attacks, bronchitis cases and asthma attacks. EPA is revising a similar mercury and air toxics standard for industrial and commercial boilers and incinerators that will save an estimated 8,100 lives.

Rolling back Clean Air Act protections would expose the public to unsafe levels of air pollution that can make people sick or kill them, and will increase the number of missed work and school days due to illness. Therefore, we ask you to support full implementation of the Clean Air Act and resist any efforts to weaken, delay or block progress toward the continued implementation of these vital public health protections. Further, we ask that you speak out publicly in defense of the fundamental human right to breathe healthy air.

Sincerely,

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