

American Academy of Pediatrics • American College of Preventive Medicine • American Lung Association • American Public Health Association • American Thoracic Society • Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America • Health Care Without Harm • National Association of County and City Health Officials • Public Health Institute • Trust for America's Health

January 10, 2014

Dear Representative:

As health and medical organizations, we believe Congress should work to protect public health, not create obstacles to important health protections. Yet, new legislation, H.R. 3826, sponsored by Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-KY) and Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), would put in place a number of obstacles that would threaten public health by indefinitely delaying carbon pollution limits for power plants. Our nation's children, seniors and those suffering with lung or heart disease deserve better. The bill would also put industry, not health scientists at the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in charge of carbon pollution limits. We therefore urge you to oppose this legislation that would interfere with the EPA's ability to save lives and protect public health by establishing protective limits for power plant carbon pollution.

Roughly half of the population in the United States currently lives in an area where air pollution linked to serious illnesses, including asthma attacks, lung cancer, heart attacks, strokes and even death. Children are particularly susceptible to the health effects of air pollution because their lungs are still developing. Scientists warn that the buildup of carbon pollution will create warmer temperatures, which may lead to even greater risks from unhealthy ozone. Ozone is a recognized trigger for childhood asthma attacks and complications for those with lung disease that also causes premature deaths.

Cleaning up carbon pollution and other greenhouse gases saves lives. Researchers¹ found that efforts enacted now to reduce greenhouse gases including carbon pollution from all sources in the U.S. would prevent more than 16,000 premature deaths by 2030. The lives saved are a result of reductions in the ozone- and particulate-forming pollution that is also reduced as carbon is reduced. Cleaning up carbon pollution from power plants is essential to saving those lives.

The Clean Air Act is one of the nation's most important public health laws, with a long history of success. With overwhelming bi-partisan support, Congress granted EPA the authority to reduce air pollution to protect public health decades ago. Currently, EPA protects public health by enforcing limits on arsenic, lead, mercury, particulate matter and other pollution from power plants. EPA's Clean Air Act authority extends to carbon pollution – authority affirmed by the Supreme Court. National limits on the amount of carbon pollution emitted from power plants are an important next step in fulfilling EPA's mission to protect public health.

We urge you to stand up for the health of our nation by rejecting all efforts to block, weaken or delay power plant carbon pollution limits, including H.R. 3826, sponsored by Rep. Ed Whitfield and Sen. Joe Manchin.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America Health
Care Without Harm
National Association of County and City Health
Officials
Public Health Institute
Trust for America's Health

¹ West et al., Nature Climate Change, 2013; 3:885-889